**MINUTES**Eau Claire County
• **Committee on Parks & Forest** *•*

Monday, February 13, 2023, at 3:00 p.m.

Tower Ridge Recreational Area

955 82nd Avenue, Eau Claire, WI 54703

Members Present: Joe Knight, Missy Christopherson, Tami Schraufnagel, Jodi Lepsch, Dane Zook

Others Present: Josh Pedersen – Director, Jody Gindt – Supervisor, Winnie Parker – Administrative Specialist III (Committee Clerk), Erika Gullerud – Finance Analyst, Kyle Johnson – DNR County Forest Liaison, Jacob Tumm – EC County Forester, Tom Mayer – Lake Eau Claire Park Ranger, Todd Johnson – Maintenance Technician, Corey Henrich – Maintenance Technician, Sarah Christensen – Lake Altoona Park Ranger, members of the public: Jeff Thielen, Kathy Michels, Robert Burch, Arlyn Stertz, Sue Lindstedt, Jan Otterholt, Fred Boetcher, Deb Rachl, Peg, Murray, Charity Zich, Disa Wahlstrand, Richard Johnston, Rick Merryfield

**Call to Order Committee on Parks & Forest and confirmation of meeting notice.**

Chairman Knight called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and confirmed public posting of the meeting.

**Public Comment**

Kathryn Schauf commented in writing as a user of the Tower Ridge trail system, “I want it known that the team out there does an excellent job!”. Supervisor Knight informed that a citizen stated a concern regarding the activity at LL Phillips Park. Bob Burch expressed concerns regarding a Lowes Creek Park trail as a user fell resulting in a broken bone. Ski Striders expressed their appreciation to the team for providing good trail maintenance, especially after the uncooperative weather and unexpected machinery breakdowns during the start of the season.

**Review of January 9, 2023, Committee Meeting Minutes**

Supervisor Schraufnagel motions to approve the minutes as amended from January 9, 2023. All in favor.

**Discussion with Tower Ridge user groups**

Kathy Michels from the Chippewa Valley Trail Riders user group announced and welcomed participation on March 18 to help clean up the trails, weather permitting, at Tower Ridge. She also suggested creating a joint calendar that all user groups can use and reference.

**Presentation of volunteer awards**

Awards were presented in recognition of their service to Eau Claire County Parks and park users. Chris Gorzek, Sue Lindstedt, Arlyn Stertz, and Karen Possley founded Kicking Kids some 29 years ago and Fred Boetcher has been instrumental in the completion of the lighting project at Tower Ridge.

**Tower Ridge winter trail maintenance**

Concerns were raised about having directional signage on the Big Falls trail. After a brief discussion, it was decided that the direction of the trail would be two way and the one-way sign will be taken down. The challenges of winter trail maintenance were explained and discussed. A suggestion was made to add a part-time employee dedicated to winter trail maintenance. Jeff Thielen is working on a grant and Go Fund Me to raise funds to acquire a groomer for the county.

**Forest Management at Tower Ridge**

The best time to manage Oak leaves and Oak Wilt is during the winter months, which presents a conflict of interest for the winter user groups. Forest management during the winter months is best for trail maintenance because the cost to rehab a trail is exorbitant. Once the Black and White Oak are deforested, the stand would naturally regenerate to mostly Red Maple and White Pine.

**Airport Tree Planting Project**

Charity Zich from the Chippewa Valley Airport presented an Airport Tree Planting Project. After a 10-year wildlife hazard assessment, wildlife abatement is necessary by removing habitat and adding fencing. To mitigate the environmental impact, a reforestation project has been proposed. The airport would like to donate funds to the Parks and Forest Department for this project knowing the funds would be used at a future date. Supervisor Zook made a motion for the committee to investigate creating a carry forward account designated for the segregated purpose of reforestation. All in favor.

**Stoney Lonesome Project with Ruffed Grouse Society**

This project is on schedule to finish this summer and includes the replacement of several gates and culverts and upgraded trails that provide year-round access and usage. The project was funded by the Ruffed Grouse Society with the Parks and Forest matching in-kind with machinery and manpower.

**Lake Altoona Park Bedload Machinery**

After some discussion regarding the delivery and storage of bedload equipment for Lake Altoona Park, the Committee decided to reconvene for further discussion on February 20, 2023, at 5 p.m. at the Ag Building. In addition, the Master Park Plan may be discussed as time permits.

**Director’s Report**

Director Pedersen provided an update on the repairs of the grooming and tracking equipment, which cost some 10k this season, and highlighted the team’s dedication to trail maintenance. In addition, Tom Mayer, after having worked for the Parks and Forest Department for 34 years, is planning on retiring this spring.

**Future Parks & Forest Committee Meetings and Items for Discussion**

Special Committee on Parks and Forest Meeting - February 20, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.

Regular Committee on Parks and Forest Meeting - March 13, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.

**Committee on Parks & Forest Adjournment**

The Committee on Parks & Forest adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Winnie Parker

Committee Clerk

Administrative Specialist III