

MINUTES

Eau Claire County

• Committee on Parks & Forest •

Monday, January 08, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

Agricultural and Resource Center

227 1st Street West., Altoona – Room 103 and 104

Members Present: Joe Knight, Missy Christopherson, Jodi Lepsch

Others Present: Josh Pedersen – Director, Jody Gindt – Supervisor, Kimberly Watnemoe – Administrative Specialist III (Committee Clerk), Kyle Johnson – DNR County Forest Liaison, Todd Johnson – Park Manager, Sarah Christensen – LAP Ranger, Charles Ellefsen – Corporate Counsel, Tim Mcmanus – Lighting Display Presenter, Brian Chapit, David Bertrang – Fairchild Representative, Tim Wucherer – CORBA, John Vinopal – Altoona Resident, Rich Lafave - Ski Sprites, Tim Skutley - Ski Sprites, Jereme Rauckman – Eau Claire Youth Cycling, Jon Olstad- CORBA

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

Chairman Knight called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m and confirmed public posting of the meeting.

Public Comment

No members of the public wished to make a comment.

Review of December 11, 2023, Committee Meeting Minutes

Supervisor Christopherson motions to approve the minutes from December 11, 2023. All in favor.

Free Ski day Tower Ridge January 21st

Director Pedersen spoke briefly on this topic as this is an event that has been held in the past. Volunteers and ski instructors are available to help anyone interested in learning how to ski.

Supervisor Lepsch motioned to approve the Free Ski Day at Tower Ridge on January 21st. All in favor.

Naming Rights for Skills Park at Lowes Creek Park

Chauncey from Corporate Counsel provided clarification on what CORBA was requesting as far as naming rights for the new skills park. CORBA would like the right to name the trails, have a sponsor board, and allow for the naming of the small playground area, not the large skills park. However, Director Pedersen reserves the right to approve the final location of the donor board. Currently, CORBA has an agreement with Corp Counsel, so these changes would not require a resolution just an addition to the current agreement.

Supervisor Lepsch motions to approve CORBA the right to name the trails, put up a sponsor board, and to name the playground within the small skills playground. All in favor.

Sale of County Owned Land Adjacent to Lake Altoona County Park

Landowner John Vinopal spoke about wanting to purchase an open lot that the County owns near Lake Altoona Park. He currently lives on Kewin Street and is unable to expand his current home due to construction restrictions. He expressed interest in purchasing the land to build a garage with living quarters above for family/friends to stay in when they visit. Director Pedersen then provided some background on the empty lot. The County purchased four lots surrounding Lake Altoona in the 80's. One of the lots was sold to the City of Altoona to build a water treatment plant, while two of the other lots were developed into boat trailer parking. There are no direct plans in the Altoona master plan to build on this empty lot, however, Director Pedersen usually would not recommend selling land connected to a park in case further expansion is needed/wanted. All committee members were in fair agreement that selling the land would not be in the

Counties' best interest as further development could be done. Similarly, if the land was put on the market, they would need to allow for bids which means anyone could win the bid and build a structure.

Supervisor Lepsch motions to deny the request. All in favor.

Ski Sprites Partnership Proposal for Two Aqua Thruster Units for Blue Green Algae Management at Lake Altoona Beach

Director Pedersen introduced this topic stating that the Ski Sprites would like to purchase aqua thrusters to help push the blue green algae out of the beach area. Rich and Tim from Ski Sprites provided further input with their main goal being to reduce the number of cancelled Ski Sprites shows. In 2022, the beach was closed 54 days. Similarly, in 2023 it was closed 38 times due to algae blooms. This resulted in a \$11,000 loss of revenue for the Ski Sprites over the last two summers. One aqua thruster unit cost roughly \$5,000 as they would need a 150-foot cord to connect to electricity. They would like the County to provide funding for an additional unit. Supervisor Lepsch was hesitant that the aqua thrusters would be a solution. Supervisor Christopherson asked if the Ski Sprites had spoken to the Lake Association about possibly funding. They had not. Consensus from the committee was not to provide financial support for a project that may not work. They advised the Ski Sprites to purchase one and test it out. If they had good results, then possibly they could revisit the committee for further support of additional units.

Supervisor Lepsch motions to allow for the use of county electricity and for placing aqua thrusters in front of county land. All in favor.

Request for Free Entrance to Lake Altoona County Park June 15th and 16th for Adaptive Ski Lessons

Tim and Rich from the Ski Sprites also touched on this topic. They have done this event in the past and ask that the county provides free parking passes for their learn to ski event over Father's Day weekend. They provide both regular and adaptive ski lessons.

Supervisor Christopherson motions to approve the free parking tickets for adaptive and regular ski lessons. All in favor.

Request from Town of Fairchild to Make Forest Road 5 an ATV/UTV Route

David Bertrang requested the county allows Forest Road 5 to be opened for ATV/UTV traffic. There has already been a public hearing in Fairchild on this topic which was well received. Opening this road would allow for the road to connect to another ATV/UTV trail and would help to alleviate traffic on Camp Road. Director Pedersen stated that the Parks and Forest staff have no objections to this.

Supervisor Lepsch motions to approve making Forest Road 5 an UTV/ATV route. All in favor.

Drive Through Lighting Display at Eau Claire County Expo

Tim Mcmanus and Brian Chait presented on this topic. They are proposing a commercial operation for their lighting display. They would like to utilize the Expo Center grounds for roughly 40 days around the Christmas Season. They are anticipating roughly 100-300 cars a night. The display would have roughly 400-500 props that are tuned to music on an FM transmitter. No one would have to leave their vehicle. The charge per car would be \$20 with \$25 during peak times. He proposed two routes, one being through the parking lot the curler use during that time. Committee members were hesitate on that route, but Tim stated he has been in contact with the curlers to work out the best possible option between the groups. Tim stated their main goal is to work out an agreement with Parks and Forest to be charged a flat rental fee similar to the Curling Club.

Supervisor Christopherson motions for Director Pedersen to move forward with creating an agreement with Corp Counsel for a set rental fee, agreement with the Curling Club for parking lot use (if that route is used), and for the committee to review the agreements once final draft is completed. All in favor.

Resolution 23-24/068 Adopting the 2024 Annual Work Plan for the Parks and Forest Department to Comply with the County Forest Administration Grant Program

Director Pedersen briefly spoke on this topic as this is done every year to receive grant money to pay administrative benefits, salary, etc. The work plan is broken into categories such as parks, administrative, expo etc.

Supervisor Lepsch motions to accept annual work plan as presented. All in favor.

Resolution 23-24/071 Authorizing the Parks and Forest Director to Submit an Application to the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to Apply for a Cost Sharing Recreational Boating Grant

Director Pedersen presented this topic. He would like to apply for this grant for the South Boat Landing project which is budgeted in our 2024 plan. He applied for this same grant for the North Boat Landing.

Chairman Knight motions to approve this resolution. All in favor.

Approval of 2024 Eau Claire Emergency Fire Wardens

Director Pedersen touched briefly on this. It is up to the local forestry committee to approve the volunteers.

Chairman Knight motions to approve emergency fire wardens. All in favor.

Director's Report

Director Pedersen provided an update on the groomer position. 5 people applied with only one accepting an interview for tomorrow, January 9th. He also mentioned Mike Schultz passing away. He made a lot of positive changes to the parks when he worked for the department. Director Pedersen and Supervisor Gindt would like to brainstorm a memorial in his honor for all the work he's done for the department.

Future Parks & Forest Committee Meetings and Items for Discussion

Next Parks & Forest committee meeting date is set for February 12, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

Committee on Parks & Forest Adjournment

The Committee on Parks & Forest adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Kimberly Watnemoe
Committee Clerk
Administrative Specialist III