

MINUTES

Eau Claire County

• Committee on Parks & Forest •

Monday, October 14, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.

Agricultural and Resource Center

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

Members Present: Joe Knight, Cory Sisk, Tami Schraufnagel, Michele Skinner, Christy Tomczak (Virtual)

Others Present: Josh Pedersen – Director, Jody Gindt – Assistant Director, Kimberly Watnemoe – Office Coordinator (Committee Clerk), Kathryn Schauf – County Administrator, Kyle Johnson – DNR County Forest Liaison, Peter Thompson – Citizen, Jerry Gordon – Altoona Lions Club, Geoff Goodland – Curling Club, Erika Gullerud – Financial Analyst

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

Chairman Knight called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m and confirmed public posting of the meeting.

Public Comment

No members of the public wished to make comment.

Review of September 09, 2024, Committee Meeting Minutes

Supervisor Sisk motions to approve the minutes from September 09, 2024, All in favor.

Peter Thompson Request to Purchase County Forest Land

Peter Thompson introduced himself and stated that he would like to purchase 5.3 acres of county forest land off QQ at fair market value to build a home. There is 1.8 acres of buildable land with the rest being flood plain. The committee agreed that the county forest land should be maintained/grow not lost. Pedersen shared that for this land to be removed from the DNR county forest law Thompson would have to prove the sale is for a higher good which applies to all the public not just one individual, which it does not. The consensus was that the committee does not want to set precedents with land sales like these as we have never allowed for a private land sale from the county forest land previously. The committee encouraged Thompson to continue to utilize the forest, but they would not be taking a vote to pursue this any further.

Jerry Gordon Altoona Lions Club Winter Event Request at Lake Altoona

Jerry with the Altoona Lions introduced this event. He would like to put on a one-day event on February 15th with an ice fishing contest on the 16th. He would like to put up a tent on Lake Altoona County Park property to support LifeSource an organization near and dear to him. The 15th would conclude with fireworks over the lake. He would like to use Lake Altoona Parks parking lots and then utilize the Altoona Hobbs arena for overflow parking and shuttle people in. Although, he does feel many that would be attending would already be fishing out on the lake. Jerry also let the committee know they have insurance and do plan on getting porta potties etc. Discussion was had by the committee, Jerry, and director Pedersen on where the best tent location would be. Pedersen does not want any tents staked to the parking lots. Supervisor Schraufnagel motions to have parks department work with Jerry and the Altoona lions club to vet the possibility of having a winter event at Lake Altoona Park. All in favor.

Update on Expo Cell Tower Lease

Pedersen provided an update on the expo center cell tower lease. The county board passed the resolution to allow for this project to move forward, but Ramaker found that the location approved is part county property and part city property, which creates an issue with the tower being built on the proposed site. Chauncey did reach out to the city to see if they would deed it back to the county as the county has mowed it and maintained it etc.

Chauncey and Pedersen are still waiting to hear back from the city, but ultimately this means the committee may need to have further discussion on the location of the cell tower. Goodland from the curling club stressed they would like to keep the strip along the road open for a potential new facility that their organization is proposing. If a new location needs to be proposed the committee will keep this request in mind.

Expo Center Land and Buildings Management Ideas

Pedersen expressed to the committee that the department does get calls often about companies wanting to purchase the expo center, developer requests, etc. He wanted to know if the committee felt like they wanted to entertain some of these ideas or if he should tell these callers that the county is not interested. The consensus from the committee was that they were open to hearing all ideas that would be brought forward to them.

County Forest Dispersed Camping Policy

Pedersen stated we are revisiting this topic as it was on the meeting minutes from September to do so. He reminded the committee while the \$12 daily rate did pass the board this can still be reviewed and changed before January 1st.

Discussion was had on possibly charging a weekly rate or even a reduced daily rate, but further discussion will be had on this at the next meeting in November. General agreement was made that the committee is more in favor for keeping dispersed camping open during hunting seasons and closing it down only during the summer when people can camp at one of our many campgrounds.

Chair Knight motions to not allow dispersed camping from June 1st to August 31st. Vote fails 4 to 1. The committee will discuss the fee, and this proposed solution again at the next meeting on November 11th.

Waiving Entrance Fee at Tower Ridge for one Sunday in January for the Ski Striders

Pedersen briefly touched on this as this is something the committee has authorized for roughly 20 years. It's more of a formality to just get it approved.

Chair Knight motions to approve the free ski day for one Sunday in January. All in favor.

Director's Report

Director Pedersen wanted to mention the drawdown on Lake Altoona. The department will be sending a press release, and a Facebook post out on October 16th to make sure everyone is aware. Assistant Director Gindt shared some updates on let-in for winter storage, dewatering of the parks, and Lake Altoona Clubhouse reservations being wrapped up for the season. Harstad campground is getting some ADA pads poured soon along with the new electric sites that will be operational for next camping season. Lastly, the fall tour went really well we had a good turnout.

Future Parks & Forest Committee Meetings and Items for Discussion

Next Parks & Forest committee meeting date is set for November 11, at 4:00 p.m.

Timber Sale Extensions will be discussed.

Committee on Parks & Forest Adjournment

The Committee on Parks & Forest adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Kimberly Watnemoe
Committee Clerk
Office Coordinator