

Members present: Rick Seefeldt (chair), Tom Rosenberg (vice-chair), Jean Maszk

Staff present: Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator, Jamie Polley-Director, Jeff Sorenson-DNR Liaison

1. Call Meeting to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Seefeldt at 1:00pm, Rm. 5, 212 River Dr., Wausau. Official notice and the agenda for the meeting was posted publicly in accordance with State statutes.

2. Public Comment – none brought forward

3. Approve Minutes – **Motion** / second by Rosenberg / Maszk to approve the minutes from the May 2, 2023 regular Forestry/Recreation Committee meeting. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

4. Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution

A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee

1. Timber Sale Closeout – Country Forest Products Contract #693-20 – A closeout summary was previously provided. Lovlien reported that the estimated number of tons was 2395 and 2576.55 tons were cut. Total revenue for this sale was \$101,552.53. Lovlien’s recommendation is to close out Contract #693-20 and return their cash bond and remaining balance in their account. **Motion** / second by Maszk / Rosenberg to close out Contract #693-20 and return their cash bond and remaining balance in their account. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

2. Review and Consider Creating a Policy on County Forest Memorials – Lovlien explained that more people are asking for memorials and the Department has developed some guidelines that it will be utilizing when considering these requests on a case-by-case basis. Forestry Committee approval will be required for any large memorials. **Motion** / second by Maszk / Rosenberg to approve the policy created for County Forest memorials. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration - None

5. Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination for Consideration by Environmental Resources Committee

A. Discussion Regarding 2024 Annual Budget and Policy Recommendations from the Committee

1. Review of Mandatory / Discretionary Program Document, 2. Review of Rates and Fees Document, 3. Review of 5-Year Departmental Expense/Levy Document – Polley explained that part of the County Board’s new budget process involves going through an extensive education process. One area of education is mandated versus non-mandated services and another area is levy support. From a budgetary standpoint not every dollar in the budget is the same. If a dollar is cut in one department that is 50% levy funded it doesn’t have the same impact on the tax levy (necessarily) as if a dollar is cut from a department that is 90% levy funded.

Polley discussed a levy support analysis (sustainability plan) the Department had put together explaining how it would like to move forward with the goals of finding ways to reduce dependence on tax levy dollars for operations and capital projects and increasing efficiencies in the department. The Department does not have mandated services but some things it does are supported by State statute and ordinances. While it is not mandated, it provides a lot of services that are of benefit to the County and have a positive impact. It makes the area a desirable place to live and work and has a tremendous effect on the economy and economic development. Another reason the levy support analysis was put together was to look at increasing costs and growing responsibilities without increased staffing. The Department wants to maintain quality services and facilities while meeting demands and wants around parks and recreation. Staff feels it’s efficient in the way staff and projects are managed with the amount of property it maintains but can always improve. Polley discussed the efficiencies of being a joint City and County department. She discussed the plan giving information on historical collective budget changes, legislative changes, the largest operational additions, operational removals, the Department’s three enterprise funds, the current fee philosophy, current operations, current staffing, and the positive impacts of parks and recreation to the community.

Staff is always looking at ways to modify its operations, fees, and searches for sponsorships and grants. It questions investing in revenue sources such as what facilities are missing from the community and what things it could expand on. Polley discussed three actionable steps the Department has created to pursue for the coming years to help aid it in the direction of continued resource stewardship. She also mentioned that the State if desired, could provide additional funding or support for conservation and recreation by taking several steps to modify existing legislation. Questions were answered and discussion followed.

6. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. Spring Timber Sale Summary – Sorenson reported that all four timber sales were sold. Sixteen bids were received from ten different contractors. Two bids were rejected for not submitting a proper bid. Wood markets have been up and down and the general trend for stumpage is increasing. The value of the acres sold was \$355,409.70 which is \$1,077.00 per acre. Lovlien said being able to get the forests managed to keep them healthy was just as important as the revenues from the sales. Questions were answered.

B. 2023 – 2025 State Budget – Update on Forestry Initiatives – Lovlien said all the requested forestry items are still in the base budget. The Joint Finance Committee proposes to increase the Forest Administrator Grant and the Sustainable Forestry Grant by \$250,000 each year which will fully fund those grants for the next two years. There is a proposed increase for ATV/UTV enforcement aids from \$550,000 to \$1.3 million which means deputies can get fully reimbursed for their enforcement. UTV maintenance funds proposed increase from \$200 to \$400 per mile. There is no change to the stewardship program which will run through June 30, 2026. The Governor has already supported these items so hopefully everything will get through when the budget is signed. As years go by everything gets more expensive and increases are needed to keep up with inflation.

7. Next Meeting Date, Time, Location: Tue., June 27, 2023, 1pm, Rm. 5 & Webex, 212 River Dr., Wausau WI 54403

A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence – none brought forward

B. Future Agenda Items: Review 2022 – 2023 Fat Tire Biking Trial Season, Consider Establishing a Winter Fat Tire Biking Season at Nine Mile Forest, County Forest Ordinance Revisions, Timber Sale Closeouts, Bat Conservation Plan Agreement

8. Adjourn – **Motion** / second by Rosenberg / Maszk to adjourn the meeting at 2:00 p.m. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.