

Members present: Tom Rosenberg, Arnie Schlei(c)-(via webex), Rick Seefeldt-(via webex)
Also present: Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator, Jamie Polley-Director

1. Call Meeting to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chairman Schlei at 1:30pm, 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 / Seefeldt to approve the minutes from the December 1, 2020 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. Consider Recommendation to Allow Class 1 and 3 Pedal Assist Electric Mountain Bikes (eMTB) on County Forest Lands – Lovlien explained that State legislation has changed their definition of an E-bike so that Class 1 and 3 are no longer considered motor bicycles. Class 2 E-bikes have a throttle and are still classified as a motor bicycle and those are prohibited in parks and forests. The Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition is strongly in support of allowing Class 1 and 3 E-bikes on local trails. Staff doesn't see an issue with them because they don't cause resource damage and are not a safety concern. At their last meeting the Forest Citizen Advisory Subcommittee unanimously approved allowing Class 1 and 3 E-bikes in County forest units while trails are open. **Motion** / second by Schlei / Rosenberg to allow Class 1 and 3 Pedal Assist Electric Mountain Bikes (eMTB) on County Forest lands. 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

1. Proposed Amendments to Chapter 16 of the Marathon County Code of Ordinances – Lovlien said staff worked with the Recreational Deputies to more clearly define some ordinances in both the parks and forests. Changes include making language more consistent, updating job titles, and adding language that no other motorized vehicles other than ATV or UTV shall be operated on designated ATV/UTV trails on park property or County trails with the exception of authorized personnel in the performance of their duties. Another change that no person shall hike, walk or run on cross-country ski trails when open for cross country skiing in Nine Mile except while hunting is proposed. **Motion** / second Rosenberg / Seefeldt to approve the proposed amendments to Chapter 16 of the Marathon County Code of Ordinances. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

5. Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination for Consideration by Environmental Resources Committee – None

6. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. Wisconsin County Forests Association Issue Papers for the 2021-2023 State Budget – Lovlien explained that the Wisconsin County Forest Association has four priorities they are supporting in the next State budget. The first issue is financial support for county and state forestry programs because of COVID-19 and the Verso Mill closure. The second item is for legislative and budget support for Wisconsin forestry programs. Prior to 2017 forestry operations in the State were funded by the forestry mill tax and this was replaced with general purpose revenue. The third issue is the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grant program for reauthorization which will expire in June 2021. Along with this they are asking for a change to allow nature based recreational development grants for county forest lands. The last issue is for increased acreage share payment. Their group has been trying for a number of years to increase the amount that the townships receive for those that have county forest lands.

B. Cash Farm Lease Town of Easton – The County has an eighty acre property in the Town of Easton which has about twenty-eight acres of farmland. The party that has a cash farm lease on it wants out of the lease. The land has been held onto in case anyone would want to trade land that is adjacent to County Forest land. The Committee has a

couple of options, they could try and trade it, sell it outright, or find a lease. There hasn't been success with trading the land and Lovlien said it is tough to lease the land because of marginal crop lands. Schlei will check into any potential interested parties in leasing the farmland. Lovlien doesn't recommend creating another County forest for that block.

C. Winter Recreational – Program Update – Nine Mile opened December 30th with no tracks set. Currently, only one hill at the Sylvan Tubing hill is open. More snow is needed.

D. Wisconsin Outdoor News Article on County Forests – Lovlien discussed an article from the *Wisconsin Outdoor News* about the history and offerings of the county forest systems and also the duties of the Wisconsin County Forest Association.

7. Next Meeting Date, Time, Location: February 2, 2021, 1:30pm, Rm. 5, 212 River Dr., Wausau WI 54403

A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence – none brought forward

B. Future Agenda Items: 2020 County Forest Division Annual Report, Forestry Division Expense/Revenue Report

8. Adjourn – **Motion** / second by Schlei / Rosenberg to adjourn the meeting at 2:15 pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.