

DRAFT

JOINT FORESTRY/RECREATION COMMITTEE AND MARATHON COUNTY PARK COMMISSION AND REGULAR MARATHON COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

Date and Time of Joint Meeting and Regular Commission Meeting: Tuesday, March 5, 2019 at 1:30 pm and 2:30pm
Meeting Location: Conference Room 3, 212 River Drive, Wausau WI 54403

Forestry/Recreation Committee members present: Arnie Schlei, Rick Seefeldt, Jim Bove
Park Commission members present: Connie Conrad, Gary Gisselman, Pat Peckham, Rick Seefeldt,
Dennis Smith
Park Commissioners excused: John Durham, Jacob Langenhahn
Staff present: Jamie Polley, Dan Fiorenza, Greg Freix, Tom Lovlien
Others present: Andrew Bremer and Dan Borchardt – MSA representatives, Rick Barnes, news media

Call to Order – Chairman Arnie Schlei called the Forestry/Recreation Committee meeting to order. President Gary Gisselman called the Park Commission meeting to order. Official notice and the agenda for the meetings were posted publicly in accordance with the State statutes.

Public Comment Period – none brought forward

Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution

A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee - 2020-2024 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan – Discussion on the 2020-2024 County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Update with Consultant - Andrew Bremer, Senior Planner with MSA gave an overview of the timeline for plan development. Currently MSA is working on inventory and background data collection. They are starting to do some needs assessments and anticipate launching a survey that will be available to the public for about a month. A public involvement meeting will be held at 6pm on April 30th at the Community Room in the Wausau Library. At that meeting they will report on the survey results and gather additional input. Then they will start developing preliminary plan recommendations and draft the plan which will go through a plan review and adoption period.

Commission members suggested the introductory wording not indicate that ten to fifteen minutes are needed to take the survey but rather that the survey would take a few minutes or that it is brief. Barnes questioned if in the future they would cover more specific and unique areas in the parks and forests instead of just general parks and forests. Bremer said that MSA did not intend to do a follow up survey but that the Department could do so in the future. Polley thought what would come out of the plan is evidence that they need to have more specific plans for many of the bigger recreation areas. This is more of an overview of where they want to get to and then they will narrow it down from this plan. This will help the Department find more about what the taxpayers want. Bremer discussed the first couple of questions. They ask about the importance of the trails, parks, and forest units to the user, how satisfied the user is with the variety and quality of them, which amenities the user would like to be added, improved, or expanded either by public, non-profit or private entities within the County, and how much use each of the parks are getting. Barnes questioned how they handle a situation like the Eau Claire River where Weston has developed a boat landing promoting more paddle traffic but the landings are fragmented because of the different jurisdictions involved yet it's a huge potential resource. Polley said if the County provides a boat launch or beach, the river or lake is mentioned and the County works in conjunction with other entities but the DNR has jurisdiction over the waterways in most cases. Lengthy discussion occurred on the best way to collect useful information regarding the rivers and lakes. The remaining questions ask if there is somewhere outside the County that people go to use the same type facilities as in the County, what specific types of recreational facilities people are commonly using, how satisfied they are with the facilities, how they feel about current fees, how they would direct future funding for improvements, the need for certain programming, an opportunity to provide comments, and a couple of demographic questions.

Survey outreach includes the Department websites and Facebook page, emails to a database of recreation users, press releases, County newsletter, flyers for posting or placing in grocery bags. Other entities that can help with outreach include libraries, schools and local recreation clubs. There is an election during this time period which is also an opportunity to have information available. The public meeting will be held at 6pm on April 30th at the library in an open house format.

Staff had been asked to go through the previous Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and indicate items that were completed, items that were not completed but should be carried forward and items that were not completed but shouldn't be carried forward. These recommendations will be discussed at future meetings. Commission and Committee members will also be asked to take another survey about what they feel are the most notable strengths, weaknesses about each facility and the number one improvement they would like to see at each. This helps MSA when coming up with recommendations.

Motion by Seefeldt, second by Bove to adjourn the Forestry/Recreation Committee at 2:26pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent.

Approval of Minutes of the February 5, 2019 Park Commission Meeting – **Motion** by Conrad, second by Peckham to approve the February 5, 2019 Park Commission minutes. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent.

Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution

A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee - Discussion and Possible Action Accepting a Donation for a Shelter at Eastbay Sports Complex - Polley said that the Marathon County United Soccer Club (MCU) approached the Department in the winter of 2018 with the desire to construct an open air shelter at the Eastbay Sports Complex near the middle of the soccer fields. The structure will provide a covered location for participants to get out of the sun and light rain. The shelter will also be used for specific event needs such as registration or a first aid area. MCU has pledged \$5,000 towards the shelter and applied for and received two grants. \$5,000 from the Walter Alexander Foundation and \$20,000 from the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin. The Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department will contribute up to \$20,000 in funds from the 2019 Challenge grant and/or a combination of these funds and labor from Department staff. The total cost of the shelter is approximately \$50,000. The Commission is asked to approve the project of an open air shelter and accept the funds from MCU. Questions about the shelter were answered. **Motion** by Peckham, second by Seefeldt to approve the open air shelter project and accept the funds from MCU with gratitude. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent.

Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. Project Update - Snow removal and snow grooming operations are persistently ongoing for the last two plus week period and it looks to continue this way into March based on weather predictions. Marathon Park ice arenas daily programs and arena maintenance operations are ongoing. The last day of ice in MPB#2 was February 25 and the last day of ice in MPB#1 will be March 10. The entire Nine Mile cross-country ski system is open with an average of 70 plus hours of grooming per week based on continuous snowfalls and abundant use. Campground firewood processing is on hold for snow removal operations. Mountain Bay Trail intersection gates are being repaired and painted. Routine operations continue such as snow removal, tree trimming and removals, equipment repair, building and structure maintenance, shelter reservations and special events.

B. Program Update - Staff is working on establishing a new ice scheduling protocol along with a new rate structure that will be brought back for approval in April. Two disc golf winter tournaments took place over the last couple months at the Big Eau Pleine. Badger State Games and the Ice Bowl. The Ice Bowl is an annual tournament that the Department sponsors with a cause to gather food and money for a food pantry. This year the tournament gathered 700 pounds of food and \$1500. All proceeds went to the Community Center of Hope in Mosinee. Staff is working with the Greater Wausau Area Pickleball Club to bring Pickleball to East Gate Hall in Marathon Park. This would be a great way to promote another healthy activity in Marathon County and provide greater utilization of this facility during a low use period during the week. The Stomp the Swamp Snowshoe Race run by Jay and Judy Punke for many years at Nine Mile was held on February 24th. Proceeds from the event come back to the Department. The Special Olympics Polar Plunge was held on February 22nd-23rd at Sunny Vale Lake where hundreds of jumpers brave the cold to raise money for Special Olympics. Future event details are being worked out as staff continually assists groups so they can be successful in the upcoming season of events. The events include; Rib Mountain Adventure Challenge, Rom the Swamp Epic, Softball Tournaments, Wausau Hmong Festival, Wausau 24, Big Eau Pleine Trail Run, NICA High School Mountain Bike Race, Ragnar Trail Run and numerous other fundraisers, walks, etc.

Announcements

A. Next Meeting Date & Time, Location – Tuesday, April 2, 2019 at 2:00 pm, Rm 3, 212 River Drive, Wausau WI 54403

B. Future Agenda Items – ordinance updates, spring park tour, cost recovery, snow making at Nine Mile

Adjourn – **Motion** by Conrad, second by Seefeldt to adjourn at 2:45 pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent.