

DRAFT
MARATHON COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

Date and Time of Meeting: April 7, 2020 at 2:00 pm

Meeting Location: Conference Room 3, 212 River Drive, Wausau WI 54403

Park Commissioners present: Connie Conrad, John Durham, Gary Gisselman, Allen Opall, Pat Peckham, Rick Seefeldt, Dennis Smith

Staff present: Jamie Polley-Director, Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator, Greg Freix-Asst. Director of Operations

1. **Call to Order** – President Gary Gisselman called the Park Commission meeting to order. Official notice and the agenda for the meeting was posted publicly in accordance with the State statutes.
2. **Special Recognition of Outgoing Commission Members** – Polley recognized Park Commission members who were not running for re-election. She thanked Gary Gisselman, Dennis Smith and John Durham for their time and years of service working on the parks.
3. **Approval of the Minutes of the February 4, 2020 Park Commission Meeting - Motion** by Conrad, second by Peckham to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2020 Park Commission meeting. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 7-0.

4. Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution:

A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee

1. None

B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration

1. Review and Propose Policy Revisions to Marathon County 15 Year Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan Chapter 900 – Lovlien explained that the Forestry/Recreation Committee and the Environmental Resources Committee have been reviewing chapters quarterly. Chapter 900 deals with intensive recreational operations on the County forest that the Park Commission has some jurisdiction over, so he is looking for their input. This is not the last opportunity to provide input as there will be a public meeting in July and also a public comment period.

Lovlien said that it was recognized that intensive recreation has been growing throughout the last fifteen year planning period so a separate chapter was created. The Forestry Comprehensive Plan guides the management of County forest taking all of the ecological, social, recreational, economical aspects into account in balancing uses on the forest. Chapter 900 includes information on planning, authority, entrance and user fees, recreational service agreements, recreational use permits for organized events, extensive recreational use of the forest, intensive recreation areas/uses, recreational trail access, demand development/exclusion, trail construction and maintenance, organized trail use and special events, designated recreation trails, and recreation program funding and grants. Lovlien mentioned that similar to the past plan, current uses will continue. One thing that the public has commented on that cannot be provided is for more recreational trails at Nine Mile. There has been no new trail mileage since 2002 primarily because there are so many current existing trails and in trying to balance everything, if new trails were created would cause potential for resource damage and additional user conflicts. The plan is to continue the management of Nine Mile as it's been in the past and focus on upgrading the current trail systems to make them more user friendly.

Gisselman supported Nine Mile's current management and said what is occurring there is unique and needs careful consideration going forward. Peckham questioned why equestrian trails were allowed in all areas except the Harrison-Hewitt and the Bern Forest Units. Lovlien said a lot of the trail systems at those two units are wet and go through lower areas which don't have built up trail systems to support equestrian use.

Commission members mentioned that a citizen had brought up a concern to some of them about language regarding trails. Lovlien commented that both he and Polley had taken the citizens information and will be discussing it with him directly. Lovlien also explained that there will be future opportunity for input and he can give more information on it as the public meeting gets closer and the thirty day comment period takes place.

Conrad thought the plan represented a lot of work and thoughtful input. Peckham had a question on language referencing Committee and Lovlien explained that the Statue reads that the Forestry/Recreation Committee is the Committee of jurisdiction so it references the Forestry/Recreation Committee in relation to moving this plan along and the Environmental Resource Committee is the statutory Committee that approves anything that goes to County Board. If Park Commission is comfortable with the draft 900 Chapter knowing there could be some changes forthcoming before it goes to County Board their recommendation will be forwarded to the Forestry/Recreation and Environmental Resources Committees. **Motion** by Smith, second by Conrad to forward Chapter 900 to the Forestry/Recreation and Environmental Resource Committees. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 7-0.

2. Approval of Resolution to Participate in a State Motorized Recreation Trail Aids Program – Marathon County has 29 snowmobile clubs that maintain and manage over 790 miles of snowmobile trails. The State of Wisconsin has established a program to aid the snowmobile clubs in maintaining the trails. Under the guidelines of the program the County is required to designate a position to oversee the grant program. Marathon County has a designated Motorized Recreation Coordinator. The grants to participate are due on April 15th of each year. The grant requires that the County approve a resolution that acknowledges participation in the program. **Motion** by Peckham, second by Smith to recommend approval of the resolution to participate in a state motorized recreation trail aids program. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 7-0.

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

6. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. Project Update – General Spring Park Cleanup: Staff has commenced park cleanup on locations where snow melt and firm soil conditions allow. Gates will be open as each park road is deemed safe and no further snow is expected. Water Systems: Meters and plumbing components are being installed for spring activation of water systems; restrooms, fountains, irrigation systems, etc. Eau Claire Dells Campground: Site remediation and road repairs are underway from the electrical upgrade last fall. Boat Launches: Piers are being installed as snow melts and flood waters are subsiding. Parking Lots: Spring cleanup; sweeping, blowing and grading operations are underway. MPB #1: New dasher board installation is scheduled for mid-May. Routine Operations/Programs: Snow removal operations as needed; Urban forestry program-tree trimming, removals, stump grinding; Building and structure maintenance; Shelter reservations and special events are on hold; Equipment maintenance and repair; Sports facility maintenance.

Polley discussed some park updates from the Covid-19 pandemic. Events have been cancelled through April and no new reservations are being taken until June. If the Governor’s order is extended, then May events will be cancelled. Campgrounds are currently considered essential and will stay open as long as they are considered as such. Group campsite reservations will be cancelled. The Department’s 100th Anniversary celebration is scheduled to take place August 15th instead of June 13th.

B. Program Update - East Gate Hall: Since the social distancing regulations were enacted East Gate Hall has served as an alternate site for Catholic Charities Warming Shelter. The facility has been a great temporary space with enough room for 25+ people, bathrooms and a serving kitchen. The Warming Shelter has now found a more long term facility with the YWCA and will be moving out of East Gate Hall by April 6th. Elections: Due to the Warming Shelter in East Gate Hall and the schools being closed, the City has moved the election sites that were originally at East Gate Hall and Wausau East High School to the Multi-purpose Building #2 in Marathon Park on April 7th.

7. Announcements

A. Next Meeting Date & Time, Location – May 5, 2020 at 2:00 pm, Rm 3, 212 River Drive, Wausau WI 54403. (possible time change)

B. Future Agenda Items – none brought forward

8. Adjourn–Motion by Smith, second by Peckham to adjourn at 2:45pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.