

**DRAFT**  
**MARATHON COUNTY PARK COMMISSION**

Date and Time of Meeting: September 29, 2020 at 10:30 am  
Meeting Location: Conference Room 5, 212 River Drive, Wausau WI 54403

Park Commissioners present: Connie Conrad, Dawn Herbst, Jean Maszk, Allen Opall, Pat Peckham, Rick Seefeldt-(via webex), James Wadinski  
Staff present: Jamie Polley-Director, Marcus Aumann-Asst. Director of Community Services-(via webex)  
Others present: Jared Wehner- Town of Rib Mtn. Director of Community Development/Zoning Administrator-(via webex), Brandon Stefanski-DNR Wildlife Biologist-(via webex), Cassandra Seubert-Sheriff's Deputy-(via webex)

1. **Call to Order** – President Conrad called the Park Commission meeting to order at 10:30am. Official notice and the agenda for the meeting was posted publicly in accordance with the State statutes.
2. **Public Comment** – None brought forward
3. **Approval of the Minutes of the August 4, 2020 Park Commission Meeting - Motion** by Opall, second by Peckham to approve the minutes of the September 1, 2020 Park Commission meeting. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 7-0.

**4. Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination**

A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee

1. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Deer in Bluegill Bay Park – Polley explained that a request had been made by Commissioner and Town of Rib Mountain Supervisor Opall to discuss the deer population in Bluegill Bay County Park and how it might be controlled. Residents recently attended a Town Board meeting and expressed their concern about the number of deer in the park and in surrounding yards. Staff has heard about the issue of deer within the park before and is also aware that certain neighbors around the park feed the deer which in turn enhances the issue. Currently hunting is prohibited within parks. The Park Commission has the ability to allow hunting to occur in county parks and given the size and proximity of the park, only bow hunting could be allowed. Staff has spoken with the County's Corporation Counsel and the DNR. Options the Park Commission has for controlling the deer population include; doing nothing, do nothing at this time and collect more information, open the park for deer hunting during the regular bow season to licensed hunters only, open a special hunt with a permit from the DNR to licensed hunters after all deer hunting seasons have concluded (this could be open to all licensed hunters and licenses would be limited) or hire skilled archers to reduce the population. If the Park Commission would like to pursue a hunt of any kind an ordinance setting the parameters would be required to be passed by the County Board.

Brandon Stefanski, DNR Wildlife biologist discussed different options for reducing the herd size. He said enforcement of the feeding ban should take place. People that feed the deer help keep the population above where it is sustainable and regeneration at Bluegill Bay Park will be decimated by the deer if they continue to be at the current population. There should be public education that if the deer are overpopulated they will have less to eat so reducing the herd size makes them healthier. If there is not food to eat, they will move on to where there's food. He discussed the different archery hunting options and said if they choose to do a hunting option that a nuisance permit might be best because they can specify numbers of permits, locations in the park, days of the hunt, that its antlerless only, that only elevated stands are used, etc. Opall said the overall responsibility is on the Town and they can control other small wooded areas but not the park. Conrad felt a campaign of public awareness would be very important. Wehner said information could be put in Town newsletter, website and Facebook page. Peckham would first like to see enforcement of the ban and education of the community before they consider other options. Discussion followed on the importance of the Town and the County being consistent on the issue so that certain areas don't become refuges for the deer.

**Motion** by Wadinski, second by Maszk that the Park Commission recommend to County Board to conduct a nuisance hunt of the deer in Bluegill Bay Park with the understanding that first the Town will do publicity about the feeding ban and that a future hunt may be possible if there is no reduction in the herd. Polley said they could either enforce the feeding ban along with a permitted nuisance hunt late this winter or they could wait to see if enforcement makes a difference and decide later if they want to do a permitted hunt. Stefanski said there wouldn't be an instant impact if people stop feeding the deer but hopefully over time the deer will move off. There will always be some deer but their numbers will be reduced. **Motion** by Peckham, second by Opall to amend the motion to say that the County will work with the Town on enforcement of the feeding ban and education for the community about feeding effects on the deer population within the park. This issue will

be brought back to consider other options such as archery hunting if the problem is not significantly reduced. Opall will begin publicity and Polley said information will be posted in the park as well. Vote to amend the motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 7-0. Amended motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 7-0.

Opall, Wehner, Stefanski, Seubert left the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

2. Discussion and Possible Action on the Proposed Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department 2021 Budget – Polley reported on items related to the budget including personnel costs, contracted services, materials and supplies, and insurance and fixed costs. She noted that the Department was able to absorb the increase of the snowmobile/ATV coordinator position from a .60 to a .75 FTE. She also said that health insurance premiums that had been budgeted at a 9% increase are now at a 6.5% increase. The PRF budget reflects an overall 0.421% decrease from 2020 to 2021. Polley gave a comparison of the 2021 budget from 2020. Of note is a large decrease in the gasoline and diesel fuel to budget closer to the three year annual average and an increase in revenues from camping. Questions were answered. **Motion** by Maszk, second by Herbst to approve the County park budgets as submitted and move them ahead through the annual budget process. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 6-0.

Polley discussed the parks small project list and said some of the priority projects include park operations mechanic shop hoist replacement, Dells of the Eau Claire Park steps to overlook and high bridge deck replacement, Marathon Park utility mapping, ice arenas rubber flooring, and tables and chairs for East Gate Hall and MPB's.

**5. Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution:** A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee and B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration - None

**6. Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination for Consideration by Environmental Resources Committee - None**

#### **7. Educational Presentation/Outcome Monitoring Reports for Discussion**

A. Project Update - Marathon Park Ice Arena Compressor Room: Refrigeration controller installation is installed. Final IT work is in progress to communicate with controller remotely. Compressors are running for ice making operations. MPB #1: Ice has been made and painted for seasonal use. MPB #2 will open on November 2. MPB's Sound System: Sound system equipment has been ordered. Staff will work with the contractor to install the system. Sunnyvale Softball Complex: Park improvement projects; New scoreboards are ordered, infield renovations are underway, new water supply lines are being trenched in, concession building concrete slabs are being poured. Replacement serving windows installed next week. Water Systems: Winterization of various systems and facilities will be started next week. Big Eau Pleine Playground Equipment: Equipment designs have been submitted by vendors. County Playgrounds: Replacement safety surfacing (engineered wood fiber) has been ordered. Replacement will begin this fall as staff time and weather permits. Routine Operations/Programs: mowing operations; urban forestry program-tree trimming, removals, stump grinding; building and structure maintenance; shelter reservations and special events; equipment maintenance and repair; shooting range; campgrounds; restroom maintenance.

B. Program Update – Aumann reported that the fair food, outdoor concert and outdoor movie events that occurred at Marathon Park all went fairly well. Questions about the events were answered.

#### **8. Announcements**

A. Next Meeting Date & Time, Location – November 3, 2020 at 10:30 am, Rm 5, 212 River Dr., Wausau WI 54403

B. Future Agenda Items – none brought forward

**9. Adjourn – Motion** by Herbst, second by Maszk to adjourn at 12:00 pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 6-0.