

DRAFT
MARATHON COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

Date and Time of Meeting: November 5, 2019 at 2:00 pm
Meeting Location: Conference Room 3, 212 River Drive, Wausau WI 54403

Park Commissioners present: Connie Conrad, Gary Gisselman, Allen Opall, Pat Peckham, John Durham
Park Commissioners excused: Rick Seefeldt, Dennis Smith
Staff present: Jamie Polley, Greg Freix, Dan Fiorenza
Others present: Sharon Belton and Mehrdad Nazari – MC United Soccer Club, Raeann Mackay – Wolfpack lacrosse, Aaron Ruff - CWOCC

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.

Public Comment Period – none

Approval of Minutes of the October 1, 2019 Park Commission Meeting – Motion by Conrad, second by Peckham to approve the minutes of the October 1, 2019 Park Commission meeting. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.

Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution:

A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee

1. Public Hearing for the 2020-2024 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan – Gisselman declared the public hearing open for comment. Aaron Ruff, 223270 Hollywood Wood, Wausau, WI 54401 said he was representing the Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition (CWOCC). Ruff said his comments are focused on Nine Mile County Forest Recreation Area which he realizes is a County forest. He felt there was a lot of information and comments in the CORP Plan that are related to Nine Mile however because Nine Mile is a County forest there's no specific recommendations for Nine Mile improvements when it comes to outdoor recreation. He said there are seventy two public comments in the plan specific to Nine Mile. He knows that the County is going through their County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2021 – 2035 so he wants to make sure the comments and information in this plan are incorporated in the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan currently being worked on. There is good feedback in regards to mountain biking, snowmaking, and hunting directed specifically at the Nine Mile property. He felt he and his fellow mountain bikers and skiers took the survey for the outdoor recreation plan and Nine Mile is a great place for outdoor recreation.

Mehrdad Nazari – MC United Soccer Club – had participated in the public hearing in April and saw his comments reflected in the plan so thought it was good to see that the process is working.

Gisselman asked three times for any additional comments and hearing none declared the public hearing closed.

2. MC United Soccer Club Facility Use Requests – Discussion and Possible Action of Requests Proposed by MC United Soccer Club – Mehrdad Nazari, MC United Soccer Club, said their group has a proposal to raise three million dollars in grants to provide an upgrade of facilities which could help save and improve access to the Eastbay Sports Complex. This would create new opportunities for the growing number of soccer, lacrosse and other users who don't have enough access to the facilities they need.

Sharon Belton, President of MC United Soccer, explained that they are a youth soccer non-profit organization run entirely by volunteers. They have two tournaments which generate large economic benefits. Participation in youth soccer and lacrosse is increasing significantly. In their organization itself, participation has increased about 70% since 2015. One factor they attribute that to is the Eastbay Sports Complex because of the quality of the fields. They need to carefully consider its future because with increased use comes more wear and tear on the facility. That coupled with the weather necessitated them to implement emergency resting of the fields this past year. All of their practices were shifted off to other locations so they are trying to look for other options that would complement Eastbay. The need is to have a cluster of two artificial turf fields with lights somewhere in the community. They have learned that there is limited options for

something like that in the jurisdiction of the City. Their tournaments are at capacity and another facility could accommodate more teams and other opportunities. The County is participating in initiatives to attract and retain workers and that the Central Wisconsin Visitors Bureau's Sports Authority mission is to make this area a premiere sports destination. They have to continue to think about where all the new young players will play in the future.

Mehrdad Nazari, Vice President of MC United Soccer Club, believes they have all of the elements together to make a facility happen. They looked at other options like Eastbay itself. It is located on a landfill that continues to settle so it's not a good investment to put artificial turf or lighting there. They looked at land adjacent to Eastbay but there has to be a willing buyer and seller. Discussion occurred on past County practices involving land purchases. Another option they considered are the brownfields north of Bridge Street but it seems like the City wants tax development in that area. Some foundations have expressed interest in their concept because there is a need demonstrated, a linkage with economic impact, their organization is a 501(c)3, and there is a possible partner with the Park Department. The foundations would need to have a letter from the Parks Department supporting the process and once it's funded would implement it. The project would be done in phases over two years and over 98% of the funding would come from non-City and non-County sources.

Raeann Mackay, Wolfpack Lacrosse, commented that their biggest challenge to a successful season is often being able to get outside. They start their league in early April and travel to other areas. They have the same challenges as soccer, trying to get kids to different fields, changing practices, and waiting to find out if they are going to get outside before tournaments or games. Artificial turf would allow them to host practices instead of traveling. Fiorenza and Freix discussed some artificial turf maintenance aspects. It has a life of approximately 10 to 12 years and requires some specialized equipment. Belton said that artificial turf would allow for greater numbers of teams that could be practicing earlier and later in the year. If there are lights there could also be practices earlier and later in the day.

Nazari said they have a sense of urgency and have gone as far as they can until a site is figured out. Opall questioned if the possible junior Olympic sports complex that would like to locate here would help them out. It was felt that is more of a private endeavor and would not be affordable for youth organizations. Their group had also considered the Weston baseball complex but by nature of its design it is not suitable for soccer. Conrad felt acquiring lands compliments the County's goal of adding additional acreage. Polley said that a section in the plan identifies land around Eastbay that should be watched and they also added a recommendation to look at other land within the County for athletic sports needs. If the Department were to maintain a facility the impact to the budget would have to be identified. **Motion** by Peckham, second by Conrad to provide the soccer group with a letter supporting the concept of their plan with funding to be determined. **Motion carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.

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

1. 2020-2024 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan – Discussion and Possible Action Approving a Resolution to Adopt the 2020-2024 County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Update – Polley said the plan is almost complete. Items that have been updated include wording, charts, boundary lines, and some trail and land acquisitions. The DNR is opening up the masterplan of Rib Mountain State Park to look at multiple recreational uses. That masterplan has been added to the CORP plan as an identified entity that the Department is going to work with. Some areas of trail connections that were updated include a bridge that could connect the Sunny Vale Park area to County Highway NN and continuing the trail connection of the Edgar to Fenwood trail south to Stratford. One of the big recommendations is the development of a Multi-modal Transportation Subcommittee to help combine the North Central WI Regional Planning Commission's Plan, the plan that MSA developed, and the MPO Plan for Wausau that connects out while working with the County Highway Department to determine what highways are really feasible. Discussions need to be about where off-road trails are needed, where on-road make sense, where County on-road make sense versus township paved roads that would be safer and then put that plan together that could be adopted by the County as a whole. Then the Highway Department would know which roads need to have extra wide shoulders and which roads wouldn't make sense because they are too dangerous to put pedestrians on. Polley needs to add staffing information to the plan including what the current levels are and what the need would be going forward. The plan will be brought back to the December meeting and will also go to the Environmental Resource Committee and County Board meetings in December. Peckham will forward some

proofreading items to Polley. He is interested in seeing a chart that includes how much public recreation lands the adjacent counties to Marathon County have.

2. Discussion and Possible Action Approving a Resolution for Participation in State Motorized Recreation Trail Aids Programs – Polley indicated that this is a housekeeping item. It is to update a resolution that the DNR approved in 2006 that gives the County staff permission to be the facilitator of the motorized recreation trail aids programs. **Motion** by Opall, second by Durham to approve the resolution for participation in state motorized recreation trail aids program. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.

Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. Wausau Area Softball Association's Use of Sunny Vale Softball Complex – Polley said when she became Director last year there was an outstanding bill to WASA for unpaid summer usage that the former Director was trying to collect. Staff has worked really hard with the group since last October trying to get this closed out and moved forward. They have not paid their bill from 2009 – 2015 and have paid their bills in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. For 2019 they paid all but \$2,500.00 for concession fees. The concession fee was added back into the agreement at her request. She has taken this to County Administration and Corporation Counsel as to where they go from here. Polley discussed how she thought they should proceed in the future with the WASA organization. Opall thought that they would want to remain consistent with the organizations. Freix commented that years ago WASA had been in front of the Commission and had asked for a decrease in their user fees. Conrad thought that Department leadership had been patient and professional in handling this and the group had been given a lot of grace. This is about fairness to all the other groups and protecting the department resources. Commission asked that the item be placed as actionable on the next agenda.

B. Project Update

Marathon Park MPB #2: New dasher boards have been installed. Bluegill South Picnic Area and Big Eau Pleine Park across from the A-Frame station: Two vault toilets have been installed. Nine Mile County Forest: Trails are being graded to prepare for the cross country ski season. Dells of Eau Claire: The campground electrical is being updated to 50 AMP circuits. Routine Operations/Programs: Urban forestry program includes tree trimming, removals, and stump grinding; building and structure maintenance; shelter reservations; special events; equipment maintenance and repair; mowing operations; sports facilities (Marathon Park Indoor Ice Arenas)

Announcements

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

B. Future Agenda Items – Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, WASA's use of Sunny Vale Softball Complex

Adjourn – **Motion** by Peckham, second by Conrad to adjourn at 4:00 pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 5-0.