

PROCEEDINGS OF THE STEARNS COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

6:00 PM

The regular meeting of the Stearns County Park Commission was held at the Stearns County Park Office, 1802 County Road 137, Waite Park, MN 56387. Most Park Commissioners participated via WebEx due to COVID-19 orders.

Members Present: Sean Gaetz, Kaye Wenker, Orville Willenbring, Anne Ackerman, and Richard Blenkush.

Members Excused: Joe Perske

Others Present: Ben Anderson (Park Director), Sarah Weed (Operations Coordinator), Julie Nistler (Office Specialist II), and George Fiedler.

Approval of the Minutes: *Ms. Ackerman made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Blenkush second. Motion passed.*

Approval of the Agenda: *Mr. Gaetz made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Blenkush second. Motion passed.*

Parkland Dedication Discussion: Mr. Anderson reviewed the Minnesota State Statute and the Stearns County Ordinance regarding the Parkland Dedication Fund. In general, a request for funds is made to the Park Commission, a recommendation is sent to the Platting Committee and the Planning Committee, and then the County Board makes the final decision. The township is to be notified at least once a year on where funds were collected and where funds were expended.

Mr. Anderson is creating an application process for future fund requests. Mr. Fiedler recommended including input and ideas from the various townships in the planning process. The new process will be discussed at a future meeting and will ultimately go to the County Board for approval.

Beaver Island Trail Update: Mr. Anderson reports that one of the neighboring landowners is negotiating once again. The County Engineer and County Surveyor will be consulted, and all cost options will be evaluated. Mr. Anderson is working with the Procurement Department to get the Request For Proposal completed and distributed.

Dairyland Trail Extension Update: Request For Bid is out for gravel for the 4 miles west of Elrosa toward Brooten to the Sauk River. The project is scheduled to be completed by the beginning of November. Before the trail can be extended into Brooten, engineering plans will be required to rebuild the bridge over the river.

Oak Township Archery Range: The Archery Range at Oak Township is officially open. A trail that leads to the river and a canoe campsite are being developed. The Archery range is being used and there have been positive comments from local residents. A donation box will be made this winter and set out for next spring.

Rockville Park Shelter: The shelter was constructed last fall, the concrete was completed over the summer, and grass was recently planted. The horse trail has been re-routed away from the shelter. The shelter is being used and will be available for rental next year. Park Maintenance Staff did a great job on the construction.

Invasive Species Update: A Master Naturalist discovered an invasive species, rough potato, along the Lake Wobegon Trail in Holdingford. It looks like a milkweed plant but grows on a vine. The plant is native to China/Japan. The only other location in the United States where this invasive species had been reported was in Iowa in the 1950's. Rough potato was found along the trail south of the Holdingford bridge and along the river. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture will continue to do research. A Conservation Corp of Minnesota crew is currently picking pods to eliminate the spreading.

COVID-19: Park Operations remain the same. With swimming coming to an end, the parking at Quarry Park shouldn't have to be limited this fall.

Park Visitor Summary: Ms. Weed went through the data received from counters and gatekeeper surveys. Information was gathered at Mississippi River, the Lake Wobegon Trail at the St. Joseph trailhead, Warner Lake, and Quarry Park. The counter at Mississippi will be moved to Oak Township.

Programs/Events:

3D Archery Shoot: The numbers for the Archery Shoot at Mississippi River were down from last year with around 80 shooters, but the event went well and had positive comments.

Rock Your Soul Run: The event will be this Saturday at Quarry Park. Because of COVID-19 guidelines, the event will be set up differently. Rather than 800 people at one time, there will be under 200 at 6 separate times throughout the day. Parking will be off site and the runners will come in the main gate and exit through the east gate.

Issues by Commissioners:

Ms. Ackerman stated she will not be attending the October meeting. She complimented the caretaker staff and park staff for the quick action of removing a dangerous tree branch over the trail at Warner Lake. She reported that Graniteman tried blocking off the parking lot at the Nature Center on Saturday, the day before the event.

Public and Staff Comments:

Mr. Anderson stated that an email was sent to the Park Board members from Knowledge Point, a training and learning management system. The County Administration sent the email; it is not junk mail; and it will be needed for future training.

Mr. Blenkush made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Willenbring second. Motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm.