

GENESEE COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

The semi-monthly meeting of the Genesee County Parks & Recreation Commission was held on Thursday, June 12, 2008, in the Conference Room of the Genesee County Parks & Recreation Administration Building, 5045 Stanley Rd., Flint, Michigan.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joe Krapohl, President
Mike Keeler, Citizen Representative
Rose Bogardus, Commissioner
William Lucas, Secretary
Ted Henry, Commissioner
Dave Miller, Ex-Officio
James Washington, Vice President
Raynetta Speed, Commissioner

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bob Ranger, Ex-Officio
Jeff Wright, Ex-Officio

STAFF PRESENT: Amy M. McMillan, Director
Ron Walker, Deputy Director
Deborah Wilkes, Secretary
Leisa Gagne, Finance Officer
Nancy Edwards, Recreation Program Specialist
Hilda McShane, Marketing Specialist

OTHERS PRESENT: Tracy Glidden

(1) CALL TO ORDER

President Krapohl called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m.

President Krapohl stated that Commissioner Henry needed to leave early and requested that we move any items we need to vote on to the front of the agenda. See other business below.

(2) OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION

Tracy Glidden, from Byron, Michigan spoke to the Commission about disc golfing concerns. He is a regular player at Goldenrod Disc Golf Course and he wants to address some of the horseback riding issues at the course. They have been addressed previously and a sign has been put up notifying everyone that this is a multi-user area and to be careful but the problem has been escalating a little bit. People are racing their horses in the open areas at the blind corner where the course is and there is a lot of manure being left in the middle of the course. During the week there are about 20 cars of people using the disc golf course with much more on the weekend. What his club would like to see is possibly charging a dollar to play a round of golf, on the honor system, depositing it in a locked steel box. The biggest problem with the horseback riders: they have a bad attitude and even last week there were horses racing in the parking lot. He is also worried about the liability issue of someone getting hit with a disc in some of the blind areas. There are places, just like regular courses where you are throwing your disc and it goes toward an area that is out of view. The disc is weighted and heavy and a person, or horse, getting hit could be a problem.

Park Rangers are coming out and policing the area, but nothing is being said to the horseback riders. Now it has gotten to the point of when you go to retrieve your disc it is in a pile of horse manure. It is a sport that is really catching on but Goldenrod is getting a negative image due to this problem. Disc golfers feel they have a right to be there too. They feel they have to be careful, not knowing when a horse could be around a corner, where horse manure is being left, or offending a horseback rider. The baskets are on the

course and the golfers don't veer into the trail areas, but the horseback riders come onto the course. The newly placed sign notifies visitors that the area is a multi-use area, but it seems to give the green light to the riders to come onto the course. It's mostly the inexperienced riders that are coming onto the course. There are larger open areas at Cummings for riders so is there a need for them to use that particular area where the baskets are?

President Krapohl said that the Director would address the issue during other business.

(3) **CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

Discussion: There were no items to discuss and no items removed from the consent agenda.

Motion to approve the items on the consent agenda.

Action Taken: Motion by Commissioner Lucas
Supported by Commissioner Washington

Roll Call: Yeas: Bogardus, Keeler, Krapohl, Lucas, Miller, Speed, Washington
Nays: None
Absent: Commissioner Henry left the meeting at 10:15, Commissioner Wright and Ranger

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 8-0

(4) **REPORT FROM LEGAL COUNSEL**

No report from legal counsel; Mr. Barkey is not present today, due to illness. Ms. McMillan said that staff will be sending the commissioners some communications later this week about some outstanding issues that relate to the parks and would be available to answer any questions for you.

(5) **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

A. Mounds Rock Crawl. Ms. McMillan gave Ron Walker the floor to explain where the rock crawl is proposed. Mr. Walker showed a map and drawings of the area where the rock crawl will be built. He said this area of the Mounds opens up another opportunity for a different activity at the Mounds. It is a very low speed, probably just a couple miles per hour, activity. We will be the only ones in the State of Michigan to have something like this. We will add additional obstacles to the course in phases. The area will be less than one acre. Ms. McMillan said that this type of activity was part of the master plan for the ORV park. The 4-wheel truck drivers have expressed an interest in this type of obstacle course. The circle track area was an area of concern for the neighbors bordering the Mounds because it generated a lot of dust so this should be a good addition to the Mounds ORV Park. The bid was for \$102,570.00. We have a grant to cover \$100,000.00 of the project. The project should be completed for use this fall.

Motion of support to approve the recommendation to award Agro-Scaping Inc for the Construction of the Rock Crawl project in the amount of \$102,570.00

Action Taken: Motion by Commissioner Lucas
Supported by Commissioner Washington

Yeas: Washington, Speed, Miller, Lucas, Krapohl, Keeler, Bogardus
Nays: None
Absent: Wright, Henry, Ranger

MOTION CARRIED 7-0

(6) **OTHER BUSINESS**

A. Deer Run Soccer Complex Field Improvements. Per Ms. McMillan: Under "Other

Business" staff was going to present the request by the AYSO in Linden County Park to install chain link fencing between the fields and split rail fencing along the parking lot edges. At the last meeting some commissioners asked for time to visit the area and see where the fencing would be installed. Today staff is recommending the Commission approve the request by the AYSO Region 417 to place fencing on the fields and parking lot.

Motion to approve to allow the Deer Run Soccer Complex AYSO Region 417 to proceed with Phase One of the fencing installing six foot galvanized green fence.

Action Taken: Motion by Commissioner Henry
Supported by Commissioner Miller

Yeas: All Ayes

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioners Ranger, Speed and Wright (Commissioner

Speed

arrived at 10:14 and missed this vote.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0

B. Vietnam Veteran's Traveling Wall. The wall will arrive on Tuesday and will be escorted by motorcycles and we will contact you with estimated arrival times. There will also be an Apache helicopter that will land on site as well. Everyone is welcome to attend the ceremonies. Commissioner Miller asked if he could join in the escort if he met them in Perry. Ms. McMillan said that anyone could ride along. Commissioner Speed said that she has seen highway signs advertising the arrival of the Traveling Wall as far back as May. Ms. McMillan said that having the wall here is very important to a lot of people and the Veteran's group is tremendously appreciative of the Parks' hospitality and partnering with them in this project. Wear your park shirt and go out there and introduce yourselves (as Park commissioners); she is quite certain you will get a positive reception.

C. If you get a chance to swing by Bluebell Beach today after the meeting or on your way to the next meeting, the Cultivating our Community gardens are planted in front of Bluebell and the trees have also been planted thanks to a grant request written by one our horticulturist Cindy Roy. The Veteran's helped plant those trees. It looks very beautiful. You'll be impressed.

D. The maintenance crew has completed construction of the Wolverine playground. The equipment is in the ground and the safety surfacing materials will arrive the beginning of next week and then the playground will be open. Monday, if the weather permits, the crew will begin installation of the playground equipment approved for Davison Roadside Park.

E. There were about 800 people at the Fishing Derby last weekend. That is an increase of about 200 people over last year. A great diverse group of people attended. The weather was wonderful and Nancy's helpers from the Steelheaders and Lake Nepessing turned out to help make sure the kids got rides in boats and they had a fantastic time.

F. Disc Golf Concerns. Ms. McMillan's primary contact is with Mark Stephens from the Flint Flyer's Disc Golf Club. They have talked about the issue of horses and disc golfers, two groups who are equally passionate about the use of the area, two groups who have limited recreational options throughout the parks, and they all feel very strongly about that. There are no laws regarding picking up after horses like there are for dogs. We have put new signage out to route horseback riders through some areas that it is easier to get across Irish Rd into Richfield County Park. For typical riders who don't stay inside Cummings Center, and most regular riders just stay in the Cummings Center or go to Timberwolf and then come back to Cummings, the signs should better direct them and avoid the disc golf course. The complaint we get from horseback riders is that too many

people who bring their dogs to the disc golf course don't keep them on leashes and they frighten the horses and people. There is an issue of people getting along. It has been easier to communicate problems to the disc golfers because they have an organized group whereas the trail riders do not. She is not aware of any racing of horses going on, but that would clearly be a problem. Before we have to impose structure on any group we are waiting to see if the signage helps. As far as payment, we don't want to have money in the parks, plus, if you can't enforce it, it shouldn't give somebody a right that is not available to everybody else. We have enough problems with people breaking into structures to steal equipment, stripping metals from parks; it would be one more issue to manage if we left money in the parks. We will discuss the issue of collecting fees in the next budget, but as of now, it doesn't seem to be cost effective to have someone there to monitor collection of fees. The expenses would exceed the revenues generated. We have been monitoring communication as it arrives to us from both groups and encourage users, whether they are golfers, riders, dog walkers, or trail walkers, if they feel there is a danger, please contact a ranger to settle the issue. We are not unaware, or unsympathetic, and we are trying to do our best to manage both sides of the issue and not choose sides.

Commissioner Bogardus said she thinks there are plenty acres for horseback riding and certainly horses wouldn't be allowed on regular golf courses. Any game that involves walking, and with horses not having to be picked up after, it is a problem. There is not that much acreage that would be closed off to horses (in the disc golf area); we should seriously look at posting the area off limits to horses. Those are two forms of recreation that don't fit together.

Commissioner Keeler said that having done a lot of outside sports he finds that most of the time "multi-use" areas really don't fit at all. People like to get away, and do their own thing and sometimes be with nature, and when you have a run-in with somebody else that doesn't fit in with your thing, people get mad and won't come back to that area.

Ms. McMillan said that with 11,000 acres we can't possibly meet everybody's needs exclusively. We have had members from the disc golf community come to our last few meetings and heard their requests. We hear from horse groups that public land is disappearing for trail riding, it is an issue nationwide. Our intent at Goldenrod was to provide an activity (disc golf) for a group, or demographic of people, that was previously underserved in the parks. You could say that the same is true for equestrians, because we have that area and the Hogbacks available for them. If we take something away to give to another, it is hard to balance that out. We have other non-compatible activities that go on at Holloway as well, such as fishing and water skiing. We are trying to see what we can do and see how well people behave and get along.

Commissioner Washington's major concern was health and safety. The mention of someone getting hit by a disc coming around a blind corner, he could see that escalating. As we move on, we need to take a serious look, from the health and safety standpoint, because it would be a real travesty if someone got hit and hurt or a fatality if someone got hit the wrong way. We should use that as a focal point as we go ahead.

Commissioner Miller agreed with Commissioner Bogardus that the two activities don't mix, manure can be an inconvenience, but safety is the number one issue. He asked how big the overlapping area is. President Krapohl asked if Mr. Walker could provide a map of the area. We are monitoring any issues in the area and if we do have a safety issue we'll possibly have to offer certain lanes where horses would have access to use the area. He could see where horses might get hit and get spooked and can also see that on a hot day the issue could escalate to a confrontation.

Ms. McMillan said we've already had issues where golfers have threatened to throw disc at horses if they didn't get out of their way. We've had horseback riders threaten to harm dogs not on leashes if they don't get out of their way. Neither side is blameless.

Commissioner Bogardus said the dogs should be on leashes no matter where they are in

the parks. Ms. McMillan said that *every* person who owns a dog knows that it must be on a leash unless it is otherwise posted that they do not.

Commissioner Lucas said most of the horseback riders he has met out there are very arrogant and think they own that area. They think they are the only ones to use that area. They can get very belligerent.

President Krapohl asked if the commission would like the staff to come up with some options for compromise, because if it comes back to us (as a board) one of the groups is going to lose out. It would be better to come up with a working solution, and realize that you will have extremist on both sides.

Ms. McMillan said compromises have been worked out in other areas, such as the Cummings Center for dog mushers and snowmobiles. The radio-controlled airplane people wanted to fly on Mott Lake and they have a designated area in which they are allowed. Commissioner Lucas asked how many acres we have for horseback riding. Ms. McMillan said horseback riding is permitted in the Cummings Center, Richfield County Park and the Hogbacks. Goldenrod and Timberwolf is all one contiguous piece of property and it has always been used that way to cross over Irish Road and continue the trail. People who trail ride tend to like to take long rides, like bike riders the longer the trail the happier they are. It's a tough balancing act.

Commissioner Keeler asked where we were at on the concrete tees vs. developing another disc golf course. Ms. McMillan said it is not financially possible for us to develop a second course. We are pursuing talking to disc golfers about having a temporary course that we can set up in a location to see if that is the right location for it, compatible with other uses, i.e. putting one in Flushing County Park. However nowhere in our County User's Survey, did anyone who uses Flushing County Park, or any of the disc golfers that were interviewed, indicate that they were interested in a course in that Park. We (the Board) said they were going to make data based decisions with our money. Knowing our user group in Flushing Park, who valued the natural environment, family environment, lack of traffic, and then disc golfers, who like to play around and through areas, which is the nature of the game, we would need to be concerned about disc going through picnic areas where a child may be hit with a disc. Same is true for the focus groups in Linden, no one submitted surveys stating they desired a disc golf course there. At the same time, the disc golfers who participated in the survey said that they wanted concrete tees above all else. Individual people may come in and voice different opinions than what the survey said. It is pretty universal that there is a strong feeling about horses throughout the disc golf community, but everybody else has a different opinion about concrete tees or additional holes at Richfield Park because it would connect better with the existing course. We feel confident that our initial recommendation was correct based on the survey data. We have another issue still on the table regarding Max Brandon Park. These two items are still out there. We have bids coming back for vault toilets at Flushing County Park as well. At the retreat in January we all agreed to follow the user survey and make improvements based on that information, and then we got to the table and thought about other stuff, which is part of the process, but it makes it difficult to get things done if we don't have a consensus.

F. Day Out with Thomas Ticket Update. 6,259 tickets have been sold and there are four trains that have been sold out.

(7) OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMISSIONERS TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION

Commissioners Bogardus changed her e-mail and lost some information; she would like a copy of the Vietnam's Veteran's Moving Wall brochure with the ceremony times and dates. A copy was provided.

Commissioner Keeler asked if we had any new information about the Coldwater Road problems. He said people are still trying to drive on it with cars by going around the barriers. Ms. McMillan said no new information was available and that we were originally told it would be around Fall when the study would be ready. Ultimately we need to know

if the road is sound. The problem seems to be underneath and when the study is complete the Road Commission will decide what needs to be done. No news is good news, the road is closed and bike riders can use it. The real problem is the underside of the road - not just what is visible damage. Commissioner Keeler asked at what point the decision would be made of where the bike path would go. Ms. McMillan said we can get the designs, and work out some options, and when it comes to bidding, at that time it can be decided where it goes. At the end of the day, if there is not a consensus on that issue either, then there is no use discussing it. She encourages everybody who has strong feelings about the bike path to talk between themselves during the coming months and come to a consensus so when it comes to the table, a decision can be made. We try to do our homework, talk to each other, and we come to the table to make decisions that we can all live with regardless of how we feel individually.

Commissioner Keeler said he hasn't been successful in getting leaders of the biking groups in Flint to come and talk to us to let us know where their preferences are. They have been unwilling to do that, but the majority of the people would like to see the trail be the road if at all possible. Ms. McMillan said the user survey said the biggest concern of the bikers is simply to get the trail built. They would prefer not to ride in traffic, whether it is one a road or not, and they would link between Stepping Stone Falls and Bluegill. The current road closure affords a nice opportunity for riders to enjoy in the absence of a trail being built. Ms. McMillan wants to direct everybody back to the Park User Survey, look at the information, look at what the people want, what is their highest priority and let's try to stick with it, like we did with the playground equipment. We are most successful when we do that.

Mr. Keeler added that the bikers using the road have taken this opportunity to keep the area clean and free of broken glass.

Commissioner Speed commended Nancy Edwards on the Fishing Derby. She has a family she has adopted and told them about it a couple years ago and they have attended for the last two years and have a great time.

8. **OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION**

Tracy Glidden said that the horse manure issue is just a small issue and he appreciates the board talking about the disc golf/horse issue. He said he dreads the day someone gets hit with a disc. Right now anything that disc golfers do is considered intentional by the horse riders and they have had some decent talks with horse riders...tape ends. Tape resumes...Mr Glidden would like to see a nice course here where a big tournament could be brought in. In another town there is a six-day tournament that is estimated to bring in 1.3 million dollars into the area. There is a man who travels to various courses and grades the courses very honestly. He would like to see our course graded favorably because we have a good thing going in Genesee County. A championship type course would really bring more people to the area to play disc golf.

Ms. McMillan said that having a championship course would bring us back to the discussion of concrete tees.

President Krapohl announced that after the regular meeting is adjourned there will be a short break and then the sub-committee for the Genesee County Fair will meet.

(9) **ADJOURNMENT**

With no objections made, President Krapohl adjourned the meeting at 10:56 a.m.