
GENESEE COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

The semi-monthly meeting of the Genesee County Parks & Recreation Commission was held on Thursday, June 11, 2009 in the Conference Room of the Genesee County Parks Administration Building, 5045 Stanley Rd., Flint, 48506.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joe Krapohl, Jeff Wright, Patrick Gleason, Jim Washington, Bill Lucas, Mike Keeler, Bob Ranger. Ted Henry arrived at 10:25 a.m. Jeff Wright left the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Billy Bradshaw

STAFF PRESENT: Amy McMillan, Director; Ron Walker, Deputy Director; Deborah Wilkes, Secretary; Hilda McShane, Marketing Specialist, Nancy Edwards, Program Coordinator; Leisa Gagne, Finance Officer; Brian Barkey, Legal Counsel.

OTHERS PRESENT: Joe Madore, Richfield Township Supervisor.

(1) **CALL TO ORDER**

(2) President Krapohl called the meeting to order at 10:12 a.m.

(3) **OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION**

No one from the public addressed the commission.

(3) **CONSENT AGENDA**

Discussion: No items were removed for discussion.

Action Taken:

Motion by Commissioner Lucas

Supported by Commissioner Washington

Motion and support for approval of consent agenda items.

Roll Call:

Yeas: Keeler, Krapohl, Ranger, Washington, Bailey, Gleason, Lucas, Wright

Nays: None

Absent: Commissioner Henry Arrived at 10:25 and missed this vote. Commissioner Bradshaw is absent.

MOTION CARRIED 8-0

(4) **REPORT FROM LEGAL COUNSEL**

Our current 5-year recreation plan will expire on December 31, 2009. We must have a plan in order to qualify for grants. The posting time for public input on the 5-year plan has expired. The time line currently projected to move this process along is to hold a public meeting, scheduled for June 25 to accept public comments. It will then be eligible for adoption by our commission on July 9 and then it would move forward to the Public Works Committee on July 15 to review it and approve for adoption before the full Genesee County Board of Commissioners on July 21st. Once approved and adopted the plan will be forwarded to the DNR by the end of July, and we will be ahead of schedule

(5) **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

A. Investments Ms. McMillan gave the commissioners a detailed report that we receive quarterly from the Treasurer's office regarding how our Parks investments are used. We will start including it in your information packet.

B. Ms. McMillan asked Nancy Edwards to share with the commission the results of the Fishing Derby. Ms. Edwards said that the Commissioners were amazing and thanked them for personally donating and helping to secure donations from sources. We had a smaller event than in the past, which was actually fine. She passed around some pictures that were taken at the event. We had a beautiful day with 148 children registered, 84 adults, about 70 families. We cooked and ate about 350 hot dogs. We had 4,000 plus and 100 plus wax worms with our own Amy McMillan counting out bait cups. We

had 14 volunteers, including Mr. Krapohl. We had seven boats available so everybody got a chance to go out in a boat. The event was purposely smaller because we didn't do a separate flyer to all the schools and much more manageable. Participants were able to talk with staff, relax and there was plenty of room to fish and no one is hooked. If you remember last year a dad was hooked by his son. We could not have done it without the financial assistance of those of you (commissioners) who gave us some funds. We gave out about 125 poles. We purchased about 100 and had some donated by Ms. McShane in memory of her father and Hilda's husband Paul also provided a boat.

Commissioner Wright commended Ms. McMillan for her worm-counting abilities! Questions, interruptions – nothing interfered with her ability to continue counting. He said this was the first time he attended and to see the excitement in the eyes of the children was great.

Commissioner Krapohl said that Kaleidoscope was scheduled for the same day at Crossroads so there was an opportunity to promote that event to our fishing derby participants and talk to people about the parks system. Ms. McMillan said that attendance was up at Kaleidoscope was up 56% compared to last year. Admission was free and our train ticket price was reduced and every seat on every train was filled. You will be receiving some formal thanks but without your support for the fishing derby there would have been no poles available to give away. Photos will be sent to the union hall with a thank you for their donation.

Fishing from the boats was not very good, but fish were caught from the shore. Rock bass, crappie, and even a goby were caught.

Ms. McMillan received a call from Joe Eufinger from the City of Flint Parks and Recreation regarding mowing in the city parks. A mowing schedule was published in the Flint Journal. The next morning it rained so they were immediately behind schedule. The City has asked us to assist mowing, one time only, at least one or all of the following parks: Bonner Park 10 acres, Rolling Woods Park 6 acres and Martin Park, a very obscure park, 4 acres. She asked if the City would be able to reimburse us. That is questionable. We will send a bill. This would be a brush-hog mowing, not a finish mowing. We can do about 1 acre an hour with a brush hog, but we'd have to survey the area for hidden obstructions and trash first. Our estimate is about \$100 per acre. If all three parks are mowed the cost could be as high as \$2,000 or as low as \$1,000 depending on the amount of time spent. Currently we are on schedule for mowing our own Genesee County Parks. Mr. Eufinger asked if we could mow this Friday, but that is doubtful, it would probably be Monday. The priority of mowing he requested was Bonner, Rolling Wood and Martin. Rolling Wood would actually be higher on her personal priority list because it is closer to one of our park areas and is often mistaken for one of our parks.

This is not a decision she can make on her own and is putting it out there for the commissioners to discuss and decide. Our own budget situation is not bright and sunny but is it bright and sunny enough to accommodate a couple thousand dollars, probably, but it is also a legitimate reason to not mow; it is entirely up to the board.

Comments and questions by the commissioners:

Which park is utilized the most? Considering their present condition, they really are not usable unless they get mowed. Bonner Park would be the top of the list, although it has a poor reputation. She has never seen anybody in Rolling Wood. The same trash as been on the top of a pavilion roof for three years. We couldn't find Martin Park, but it is adjacent to a school so we are not familiar with that park's usage.

If we do mow, will the City be able to keep the pace up or let them fall into the same condition so nothing would be accomplished by our efforts. Ms McMillan said the city has intentions to make a good faith effort to keep it up. There was a resolution passed by our County Board about cooperative efforts with the City of Flint, which the City Council ungraciously rejected. Regardless of that rejection, Joe Eufinger has our phone number and he can call anytime for questions, advice and technical assistance.

Is this finish mowing or only brush hogging? It is only brush hog, we can't get in there with our regular mowers.

Are these our employees and our equipment? *Yes, only our employees would be permitted to use our equipment.* Last Sunday the grass was mowed at Flushing County Park on Sunday, are County parks normally on Sunday? During a time when we have customers in pavilions and kids on the ball fields? *Yes, we have regularly scheduled mowing days, but if we have rain, those days must be made up. We do not pay time and one half, no employee is allowed overtime, all mowing is done in the course of their work week of 40 hours or less, with no overtime There are still some low areas that can only be weed-whipped because we can't get mowers in there.*

The City Parks are probably more likely 2 months and a day behind. Not just one day. None of the City Parks have been mowed, or very limited mowing only around limited areas. Where is the City park millage money? Some areas that have been mowed actually look better when they are left alone and not mowed when all they are is an industrial area, not a park. *They haven't done a consistent mowing program in five years. We did some research about the City Parks when asked by a local funding source and found that their millage generates about \$800,000 a year, and we estimate that for the first year of a regular mowing, trash pick up and patrolling by police (like we patrol with the rangers) it would take approximately \$2.1 million to do this. They are spending over 1 million on their golf courses with the general fund making up the difference between the income and expenses of the golf course. General fund monies have not been contributed to the parks. This is a very broken system and Mr. Eufinger is making a concerted effort to make things better.*

We have helped at Max Brandon Park in the past, we do collect park millage from city of Flint residents, so if anybody were to ask why we would mow for a one time shot, that could be justification. Would it set precedence and would they ask more this summer and next year. Because the city residents pay into our county park millage he would not have a problem, however he would if it was stretched into a "you should be doing it the rest of the year" situation.

More than once he has been confronted about the pavilion roof at Flushing County Park. Has it ever been replaced yet? *No, it is a \$40,000 job.* The price of hay is very high and people would come in and volunteer to bale the cuttings from the mowing.

Has anybody looked at Max Brandon Park lately? What condition is it? *Yes, and it is deplorable.* We have been in there before to help and they said they would maintain it. It won't happen here either. What would it help to go in there and it still isn't useable. He is in agreement that the City of Flint people pay county millage for county parks, but they have just as much an opportunity to use our parks as other taxpayers from other parts of the County. The City needs to fix their problem internally. Helping them out is a good gesture, and great PR, but it will not fix the problem. We have things that need attention; we need to take care of our own roofs and fences.

This is a temporary administration and they are in there doing the best they can with what was thrown at them from the previous administration.

To do the mowing once, just once, would be a great gesture on our part, in the spirit of cooperation. Mr. Eufinger is trying to do the best he can and if we can do it, it is worth doing once, and then leave the rest to them. They are very close to state takeover again. If we are team to rebuild this county it would be a great gesture. Once.

Did they ask us to do it free? Did they give us any indication they would pay? *Mr. Eufinger said at this point he would write a personal check if need be. Not that we would expect him to do that, he's a good guy. We will send a bill to the city and not be surprised if it does not get paid, or be surprised that it is paid.*

How long would it take to mow these parks and would it interfere with our mowing schedule? *It depends on the park. Bonner could take 10 hours, 6 hours for Rolling Wood and 4 for Martin. That is considering we don't get in there and find lots of trash. We can only use brush hog equipment, we can't afford to put our finish mowers at risk on property that is not ours. We will have to take a man off some of our special projects to supervise the mowing.*

Were those three parks on the City's mowing schedule? *Yes they are parks they plan to take care of.*

We don't want to set precedence where we are expected to come in and help. Why didn't they contact some contractors to do it? *They did in the past, but when the contractors stop getting paid, they stop mowing.*

Is there a way some areas could be mowed, around playgrounds, walking paths, etc. and others left unmowed. *Those estimates we have provided are mowing useable areas. It isn't much different than what we do in our parks. We sometimes mow 10 feet beyond a particular area and leave the rest as a natural perimeter.*

Would helping them benefit us or help us secure grant funds? *It makes foundations feel good that you work well in cooperation with other agencies, but that may not translate into dollars. Foundations are suffering now from their own financial problems.*

...tape ended...

...new tape started...

We would have one person on the brush hog and two or three to check the property for obstructions.

He agrees that it is a good gesture of cooperation and good for public relations to help out but we don't want it to look like the County is taking care of the City parks when all other municipalities are looking for money and having their own budget problems. He could entertain a proposal to do it on a contractual basis. Tax money is collected for a specific use and should be used for that purpose. If we are contracted to do the work with a fee attached, that is fine, but to do it without a contract and then have other municipalities turn to us and say they would like to have the same opportunity because they have limited budgets and turn them down wouldn't be fair. We should stay the course. If we could obtain a contract and the assurances that the property would be maintained by using a finish mower behind us. Brush hogged land is not useable.

If we brush hog this, will it make it easier to get in there and clean up the park, or easier for people to walk in there and dump more. *Typically we find that the better a property is maintained the better people respect it. It requires a consistent effort.*

Are we infringing on the city employees' bargaining unit? If they outsource it with a contract why can't they outsource it privately and they could certainly beat \$100 per acre for the same services. He has a hard time supporting that.

It makes more sense, if they aren't going to follow through after the brush hogging with mowing, to wait until the rains stop and go in there and brush hog it once in July/August when it gets dryer. *Their intention is to have a regular mowing schedule.*

If we do it, it should have a monetary value attached to the contract and either the City agrees or doesn't, that would be their option.

Can we go full-court-press for public relations or keep it quiet. It is guaranteed that if it is publicized, City of Flushing, Linden will call, Flint Township will call. The preference would be to keep it quiet. *Flushing Township has already called.*

Would we be interested in contracting someone to do it for \$50 bucks an hour? *If we hired a contractor someone from our staff would still have to supervise the work so that it gets done.*

Becoming the go-between contractor is not something we want to be involved in; they have the same option to look for someone to do it less expensive than \$100 per acre.

Joe's (Eufinger) word is good and if he says it's one time, it is one time. Anything long term would take more discussion.

How many municipalities have already sub-contracted this type of work? The city will have to look at what services they can and cannot provide. It's everywhere. *We have suggested they need to consider shrinking the parks like the talk has been to shrink the city. There are approximately 7 employees in the City Parks system. Most of those people are reassigned to the golf courses. Their bargaining unit has approved hiring seasonal employees this year.*

When the City contracted IMA Brookwood to take over the Pierce Park who maintains and mows that? IMA or the City? *IMA took over maintenance. No other courses have been contracted out at this time. Swartz Creek Tavern on the Green was contracted, not the golf course itself.*

Motion and support to enter into a legal contract with the City of Flint for a one time mowing of Bonner Park and/or Rolling Wood Park and/or Martin Park at a cost of up to \$100.00 per acre. This is in response to a request by the City of Flint and not to be implied as any future services from the County Parks. The contract would be for any one or more of the city parks but limited to Bonner, Rolling Wood and Martin.

Action Taken:

Motion by Commissioner Gleason
Supported by Commissioner Washington

Roll Call:

Yeas: Bailey, Gleason, Keeler, Krapohl, Washington
Nays: Henry, Lucas, Ranger
Absent: Commissioner Bradshaw and Wright are absent.

Motion carried 5 - 3

(6) OTHER BUSINESS

A. **Discussion** – Legal counsel request that the board enter into closed session to discuss a written legal opinion.

Action Taken:

Motion by Commissioner Washington
Supported by Commissioner Keeler

Motion and support to enter closed session pursuant to Section 8 of the Open Meetings Act to consider a written legal opinion of counsel for the Commission within the attorney-client privilege.

Yeas: Washington, Ranger, Lucas, Krapohl, Keeler, Henry, Gleason, Bailey
Nays: None
Absent: Commissioner Bradshaw and Wright are absent.

MOTION CARRIED 8-0 and committee entered into closed session at 11:09 am.

Regular meeting was reconvened at 11:27 am.

(7) OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMISSIONERS TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION

There will be a sub-committee meeting of the wildlife management members immediately following this meeting.

(8) OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION

Joe Madore provided a map to each commissioner showing them the piece of property that Richfield Township is interested in purchasing and laying a bike path to enter into Richfield County Park. There is presently a trail coming into the park from this direction. He always assumed that it was park property but found out otherwise. This window of opportunity has opened due to the landowner selling parcels, so the township would like to purchase the property and make a bike path from the Siple School property to Richfield County Park near the play scape. In the grand scheme of things he'd like to see a parking lot on that property as well as a new entrance into the county park. When the Gale Road entrance was closed it hurt the park. Rather than buying 20 feet now and more at a later date, they want to purchase the whole piece wide enough for possible future plans. A bike path is easy, a future park entrance is something for later consideration, maybe 20 years away. If the Township can be more helpful in promoting this park they would like to be a part of that.

He further commented about citations written in the parks and that residents have made complaints about the enforcement of activities in the park. He'd like to change the perception of that park. He knows that if the Richfield Township police enter the parks it is only to enforce the law not to write citations because they don't enforce park rules, it is not their jurisdiction. He asked if sting operations are still done.

Ms. McMillan said that all the residents know that if they see something happening they call 911 immediately and a park ranger will be sent out. We have found that when neighbors actually do that, rather than telling stories about something that they observed three days after the fact, we have made successful arrests. We can't do anything after the fact. President Krapohl said that we won't discuss the plans for sting operations, but in the past he has called about (unlawful) activities right away and before he leaves the park, the rangers have arrived and are handling it. People need to utilize the 911 system.

(9) ADJOURNMENT With no objections made, President Krapohl adjourned the meeting at 11:37 a.m.