

**Hendricks County Parks and Recreation
Park Board Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, December 7, 2016
2:00pm

Parks & Recreation Office
955 East Main Street
Danville, IN 46122

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 2:00pm

Board Present: Gary Emsweller, President
Paul Miner
Bob Niemeyer
Matt Freije
Doug Moon

Board Absent: Beth Switzer, Vice President
Dennis Gibbs, Secretary

Staff Present: Jeremy Weber, Superintendent
Linda Brunner, Administrative Assistant

Guests: Mike Hayden
Joy O’Keefe and Brianne Walters, Center for Bat Research,
Outreach & Conservation, ISU
Ray Benson

A. CALENDAR

A-1. Agenda

Emsweller requested the Agenda be amended to include under Continuing Business an update on the development of Gibbs Memorial Park.

Miner moved to adopt the agenda as amended; seconded by Niemeyer, the motion passed unanimously.

A-2. Approval of Minutes of November 2, 2016 Meeting

Miner requested that the minutes of the November 2, 2016, meeting be amended to correct a misspelling in paragraph C-4, changing “summitted” to “submitted”, and under the Superintendent’s Report, replacing the word “avoid” with “caution against.”

Niemeyer moved to approve the minutes as corrected; seconded by Freije, the motion passed unanimously.

A-3. Review Current Budget Status

Brunner distributed a spreadsheet detailing the end-of-year budget status, including funds remaining in accounts, funds requested to be encumbered, and transfers requested to cover year-end expenses. There were no questions regarding the budget status.

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS/PRESENTATIONS

B-1. Public Comments

Emsweller introduced Mike Hayden, a current member of the Board of the Parks Foundation of Hendricks County, who had recently been appointed by the Hendricks County Commissioners to replace Dennis Gibbs on the Park Board. Gibbs had previously been appointed to serve a 4-year term ending January 1, 2018, but resigned his position on the Park Board, effective December 31, 2016. Hayden spoke briefly about his history with parks and recreation, and his and his family's interests. Hayden expressed his enthusiasm to be joining the Park Board, and was welcomed by other Board members.

C. CONTINUING BUSINESS

C-1. Vandalia Trail Update

Weber advised that the contractor had not yet begun paving because of the cold weather, but had been winterizing and preparing to shut down their operations for the winter, to continue the paving process in the spring. He stated he was scheduled to meet with the contractor the following day.

Weber also advised that he had recently discussed the extension of the trail with Dan Slattery, the Administrator of the Town of Clayton. Slattery indicated the Town of Clayton was looking forward to the trail coming through and recognized its importance as an economic development tool. Weber also relayed to the Board that he had had discussions with Greg Midgley, who was looking into grant opportunities for land acquisition or construction, and will learn more at his upcoming meeting.

Weber reported on his recent meeting with representatives of Butler Fairman & Seufert. He advised that BFS had identified a parcel still owned by CSX. Weber requested they move forward with acquisition of that parcel. In the meantime, they will work on identifying landowners who may now be willing to talk about the trail.

C-2. Russell Property Update

Weber advised that he had received the third appraisal on the Russell Property, which valued the property at an amount between the first and second appraisals: \$2,200,000 for the land and land improvements, and \$625,000 for the house and immediate acreage. He advised that the average of the appraisals is \$2,200,000. Weber also informed the Board that the Bicentennial Nature Trust had approved his grant request for \$300,000 to assist in the land acquisition, but had unfortunately approved more projects than it has funds to support. The BNT will determine in the near future which projects will move forward at this time, and which will be placed on a waiting list. The next round of awards will be in June, 2017. Weber indicated the BNT was very enthusiastic about this project. He advised that he had been invited to attend a joint workshop with the County Council and Commissioners on December 13th and plans to talk with them about the property at that time.

C-3. McCloud Arboretum Update

Weber advised that the well has now been contracted, but not yet installed. He expects that installation will take place at some point this winter.

C-4. Gibbs Memorial Park Update

Emsweller informed the Board that while Dennis Gibbs has resigned his position on the Park Board, he has agreed to serve as chair of a task force to move forward with preliminary

development of Gibbs Memorial Park. The plan is to keep it simple, phasing in development with a gravel parking area, port-o-lets, and basic trails. Emsweller said he plans to get together with John and Lydia Gibbs, neighbors and other interested parties. Miner volunteered to serve on the task force, and suggested going through the list of attendees from the public hearings that were held during the formulation of the master plan.

D. NEW BUSINESS

D-1. Town of Plainfield - MOU

Weber told Board members that he had expected but not yet received a new MOU from the Town of Plainfield with regard to working out a plan for acquisition of the additional 2,000 acres of land owned by the IAA in the Habitat Conservation Plan Area. Weber advised that when he spoke with representatives of the Town of Plainfield last summer, they indicated they wanted to develop acreage in the protected area, and mitigate other areas. Weber informed the Board that it was his understanding two infrastructure projects had previously been done which the Town of Plainfield viewed as precedent to allow development to take place on protected land. He added that US Fish & Wildlife, however, is opposed to any such development on protected land. Weber suggested the possibility that the Park Board could acquire 2,000 acres, but not contiguous acreage, which would be difficult to manage. The Board discussed addressing the issue of scheduling regular meetings with representatives of the Town of Plainfield to discuss development plans.

Freije moved to defer a decision on signing a new MOU until such time as a draft MOU is received and reviewed by the Park Board and the County Attorney; seconded by Niemeyer, the motion passed unanimously.

D-2. Sodalis Report – Joy O’Keefe

Emsweller introduced Joy O’Keefe, the Director of the Center for Bat Research, Outreach & Conservation at Indiana State University, along with her assistant Brianne Walters. O’Keefe gave several reasons for the decline in the Indiana bat population and explained the Center’s objectives in protecting the endangered Indiana bats. She discussed at length the results of ISU’s research conducted under a 2002-2017 Habitat Conservation Plan, the purpose of which is to ensure continued habitat to support Indiana bats in the project area. The study provided an opportunity for O’Keefe and her colleagues, with 13 graduate students and 50 technicians, to study an Indiana bat maternity colony near the Indianapolis Airport. The study focused on assessing bat community and population demographics, studying roosting ecology and social behavior, and studying the foraging ecology. O’Keefe reported that the researchers were able to establish that the bats return annually, switching between three key roosting areas around Sodalis Nature Park. She thanked the Board for its management efforts at Sodalis, which she said are good, but added that protecting a larger foraging area will be important for the future of the Indiana bat. She also stressed the importance of managing the surrounding woods to allow for trees to grow up to provide key roosting areas in the long term, and educating members of the surrounding community on how best to maintain the areas where the bats forage.

E. REPORTS

E-1. Superintendent Report

Weber distributed a schedule of proposed Board Meeting dates for 2017, and discussion ensued regarding the possibility of moving the meeting time from 2:00pm to early evening to encourage more public participation. There were conflicting ideas about the time change, but the Board was open to the possibility of changing the time for a few meetings.

Miner moved to approve the schedule of dates as presented, factoring in three dates (to be determined) with the meeting time to be changed to the evening to encourage more public participation; seconded by Niemeyer, the motion passed unanimously.

Weber advised that he had been working with Park Manager Holtsclaw and Park Naturalist Wolf on updating exhibits in the Nature Center. Wolf had solicited quotes from outside companies which came in at approximately \$50,000, well over the \$10,000 budgeted for this project. Consequently the work will be done in-house, and is likely to be completed under the \$10,000 budget. It was suggested that a local printer/sign shop might be interested in donating to this project in exchange for their name on the exhibit. Hayden volunteered to help reach out to make this contact if needed.

Weber advised that he, Eric Ivie and Paul Miner had been working to develop a strategy for educating the community and elected officials on the importance of parks. He distributed an outline that Ivie had compiled after their recent brainstorming session, for the Board to review and then discuss in depth at an upcoming meeting.

E-2. Youth Advisory Board

Freije reported that the Youth Advisory Board's next gathering will be a holiday party on Saturday, December 10th at the offices of the Hendricks County Economic Development Partnership, with their next regular meeting scheduled in January.

E-3. Committee Reports

Miner advised that Policy and Land Acquisition meetings would be scheduled in the near future. He also noted that the Commissioners had rejected the study they had commissioned on the SR-39 Corridor.

E-4. Foundation Report

Weber reported that the Parks Foundation has not yet filled Randall's position. He informed Board members that the Foundation Board had scheduled a mission and vision exercise in January and would discuss their direction and focus and decide at that time what changes would be made in the job description.

ADJOURNMENT

Emsweller reminded Board members that officer elections would be held at the January meeting.

Miner moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Niemeyer. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

_____, Secretary