

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

Wednesday, February 1, 2017
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: Paul Miner, President
Bob Niemeyer, Vice President
Matt Freije, Secretary
Gary Emsweller
Doug Moon
Mike Hayden

Board Absent: Beth Switzer

Staff Present: Jeremy Weber, Superintendent
Linda Brunner, Administrative Assistant
Sarah Wolf, Park Naturalist

Guests: Ray Benson
Dennis Gibbs
Stephanie Dolan

A. CALENDAR

A-1. Agenda

A revised Agenda was distributed to Board Members adding the following items under new business: D-2. 2017 Meeting Date/Time Conflicts and D-3. W.S. Gibbs Cash Farm Lease Terms.

Freije moved to adopt the revised agenda; seconded by Niemeyer, the motion passed unanimously.

A-2. Approval of Minutes of January 4, 2017 Meeting

Emsweller advised that the minutes misstated his comments regarding his service on the Parks Foundation Board and that he had not stated he no longer wished to serve on the Foundation Board but instead had stated that it would be in the best interest of the Board for him to step down from the Foundation Board and for the Park Board President to serve in that capacity. Miner then advised that his membership on the Foundation Board had been declined and that Mike Hayden had agreed to serve as liaison.

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

A-3. Review 2017 Budget Status

Brunner distributed a spreadsheet setting out the current budget status minus appropriations and encumbrances in the Food & Beverage and Innkeepers lines. She advised that the auditor's office had not yet closed out 2016, and that she would create a spreadsheet detailing the complete

2017 budget status when all funds had “officially” been appropriated. There were no questions regarding the budget status.

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS/PRESENTATIONS

B-1. Public Comments

Stephanie Dolan, Hendricks County Flyer, introduced herself and was welcomed to the meeting.

C. CONTINUING BUSINESS

C-1. Annual Program Report – Sarah Wolf

Wolf gave a brief power point presentation and discussed the various programs that she and her staff presented in 2016. She distributed a compilation of the program types and numbers of children and adults who were impacted by HCP&R programs in 2016.

C-2. Vandalia Trail Update

Weber advised that he had met with the contractors, the designer, and the inspector, and they have identified areas to cut costs on the current phase of the Vandalia Trail. Also he stated he had a discussion with Jim Deahl of BFS to learn why Deahl had recently contacted a certain landowner. Weber said Deahl had told him that the Board made an offer to the landowner for the purchase of a particular tract of land along the next phase of the Vandalia Trail. Under INDOT rules, if the offer is not accepted within a prescribed time, the Board would be barred from negotiating with the landowner for 3 years. If the offer were withdrawn by the Board, BFS could continue to work with the landowner to get a better solution. For that reason, BFS has recommended that the current offer be withdrawn. Also, because the Board is barred from negotiating directly with landowners, Deahl has proposed an amendment to its contract to include “kitchen table” meetings with landowners, as they are required to certify that the negotiations are done legally. He stated that the original contract did not cover these meetings, and this needs to be done to keep the grant moving forward. The contract would cover meetings with landowners at an hourly rate, not to exceed \$15,000.

Hayden moved to authorize BFS to prepare an amendment to its contract to cover these landowner meetings at an hourly rate, with the total not to exceed \$15,000; seconded by Freije, the motion passed by a vote of 5 to 1, with Niemeyer dissenting.

Niemeyer expressed his interest in extending the equestrian portion of the trail to Clayton, and Weber advised the details would be worked out at a later time.

Regarding the previously discussed parcel owned by CSX, Weber advised that he has now learned that CSX wants a deed restriction so they could maintain control of the parcel. Weber stated the only way to acquire it without those undesirable restrictions attached, would be to condemn, so he recommended backing off for now.

C-3. W. S. Gibbs Memorial Park – Planning Update

Dennis Gibbs advised that the task force had met a couple times, and that he has met with the landowners, John and Lydia Gibbs, and while he will be making his final recommendations in March, he wanted to make the Board aware of a couple items. First of all, an open well is located along the fence line. The top has deteriorated. Gibbs stressed that this is a liability that needs to be addressed right away. He also advised that there was an old cabin onsite, possibly built by one of the first settlers in Hendricks County, that has since burned down, but the area may be a great opportunity for an archeological dig, perhaps involving universities or other outside entities. He stated that the current location of the drive and parking area are directly east of the cabin location. Gibbs also suggested curtailing cropping from the tree line, possibly extending the tree lines up to 20 feet into the current

tillable acreage so seed could be sown for future trails, and that reforestation could begin by setting aside 7 or 8 acre parcels and initiating an adopt-a-tree program. He added that 2-3 acres could be taken out of production to prepare for the orchard, and that the Hendricks County Master Gardeners may have an interest in assisting with that project. Asked about the cost to begin phasing in the park with rudimentary amenities, Weber estimated the cost to be in the range of \$475,000 to \$1 Million.

C-4. Parks Awareness Campaign Update

Weber advised that the parks awareness campaign was going very well, and encouraged Board members to talk to appointing bodies. There was discussion about the press releases that have gone out so far, some having been picked up by other newspapers in the region. Weber stated that it would be helpful for all our elected officials to be aware of what we do and what we provide, and how we can drive economic development. Weber stated that lack of awareness of our parks makes fundraising difficult. Weber added that our social media following continues to grow, and provided Eric Ivie's monthly compilation of social media platforms on which our department maintains a presence, and their rates of growth to date. He advised that HCP&R's new website would be rolling out soon, and that we will be reaching out to various groups regarding our efforts to improve fitness in the community.

C-5. Park Board Retreat

Weber suggested several dates as possibilities for the park board retreat, and the board agreed on March 17, 2017, from 8:00am to Noon at the Hendricks Regional Health YMCA. Weber advised that he would provide board members with a list of talking points by email, and the board could prioritize before the retreat.

D. NEW BUSINESS

D-1. Pending Legislation

Miner reported on the history of a bill in the House this session that would change the manner in which park boards are appointed, advising how he learned about it, Weber's discussions with other park superintendents at the IPRA conference in January, and discussions with the director of IPRA. He advised that he and Weber had traveled to the State House to talk with the House Local Government Committee chair, and the bill's author, and subsequently to testify at the bill's committee hearing, where IPRA read a statement outlining its opposition into the record. Miner thinks the legislators are willing to compromise on the language contained in the bill. Emsweller also sent letters to friends in the legislature and committee members alerting them the park board's opposition to the bill, stating he had received several favorable responses. Miner advised he would continue to monitor the status of the pending legislation and would report back to the board.

D-2. 2017 Meeting Date/Time Conflicts

Weber advised that Leadership Hendricks County has scheduled meetings on several park board meeting dates and asked the Board if it wished to move its meetings to the second Wednesday of the month during those months. The park board agreed by consensus to change the meeting dates in March, April, May, June and October to the second Wednesday of the month, and Weber advised he would provide the revised meeting schedule by email.

D-3. W. S. Gibbs Cash Farm Lease Terms

Weber advised that he had been contacted by Dan Searcy regarding the terms of his Cash Farm Lease for the tillable acreage at Gibbs Memorial Park. Searcy had requested that the rate per acre be reduced from \$232 to \$200 due to decreased commodity prices and increased expenses. There was a discussion of certain tasks that could be performed by Searcy to offset the rental income, such as seeding a 20' strip of land along the fence rows now and planting grass this fall for future trails. Weber said that he and Miner would negotiate with Searcy and get back to the Board.

E. REPORTS

E-1. Superintendent Report

Weber stated that he had reviewed the MOU with Plainfield and had questions for the Board's attorney. He was particularly concerned about the language addressing "appropriate use" of adjacent land not in the conservation area. He said there should be clarification of what "appropriate use" meant, and by whose definition it would be determined.

Weber provided the Board with updates on the status of the boardwalk in the new wetlands mitigation area at McCloud, and the new exhibit wall at the McCloud Nature Center.

E-2. Youth Advisory Board

Freije advised that the last meeting had been cancelled due to inclement weather. He said that Lora Steele would be leading the upcoming meeting, where the YAB members would be creating their aprons for their volunteer service at the March 11th Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser.

E-3. Committee Reports

Weber reported that the Policy Committee was working on policies for geocaching and metal detecting at the parks. Miner reported that the committee was also discussing proposed policies on land acquisition, naming rights, by-laws, board member duties, and retail sales/donations to bring before the Board.

E-4. Foundation Report

Weber advised that the Foundation Board had met for a mission and vision exercise, and he had noticed their discussions overlap with some Park Board concerns. They also asked if the Park Board could help with events such as the Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser and the Native Plant Sale.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Freije, Secretary