



Park Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 1, 2023
2:00pm

955 E. Main Street
Danville, IN 46122

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 p.m.

Board Present: Mike Hayden, President
Brad Eisenhart, Vice President
Matt Freije, Secretary
Gary Emsweller
Paul Miner
Jeff Pell

Board Absent: Bill DuMond

Staff Present: Ryan Lemley, Superintendent
Eric Ivie, Assistant Superintendent
Jim Holtsclaw, Park Manager
Sarah Wolf, Park Naturalist

Guests: Greg Midgley, National Road Heritage Trail

A. CALENDAR

A-1. Adopt Agenda

Miner moved to adopt the agenda; seconded by Freije; motion passed unanimously.

A-2. Approval of Minutes from February 1, 2023, Park Board Meeting

The minutes from the last Park Board meeting could not be approved because there were only four members of the Park Board at the last meeting and only three of them are at this meeting. **The matter is tabled until next month's meeting.**

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS / PRESENTATIONS

B-1. Public Comments

Lemley showed the Park Board the wooden medals for the Maple Sap Run that Holtsclaw created from a fallen walnut tree at McCloud Nature Park. Long-time volunteer Gene Ardeel also played a large role in the creation of the medals. The Park Board was duly impressed. Lemley also presented Midgley with a Maple Sap Run commemorative headband.

Midgley advised the Park Board that the National Road Heritage Trail (NRHT) is working with the People Pathways in Putnam County to open up another three miles of trail southwest of Greencastle, which will be a rustic hiking trail. He said it's the most beautiful, natural section of the trail corridor across the state, so he is excited. It will be a dead-end section of trail, but it's three miles without any interaction with any manmade items.

In Marion County, NRHT is working with White Lick Creek and Vandalia Trail Alliance, a not-for-profit group, on the development of 6.8 miles of trail from Plainfield to the Eagle Creek area. In January, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Indianapolis Airport Authority to run 2.5 miles of the trail along their property across the north side of the airport. They are also working on acquiring other land parcels to develop that section of trail.

C. NEW BUSINESS

C-1. McCloud Nature Park – Harlos Fund Discussion

Ivie advised the Park Board that he and Lemley met with Katy Cummings of the Parks Foundation of Hendricks County (PFOHC) and William Rhodehamel of the Hendricks County Community Foundation (HCCF) last week regarding the Harlos Fund that is being managed by the HCCF.

Rhodehamel told Lemley and Ivie at the meeting that the HCCF would like to see some of that money utilized within a reasonable amount of time, or at least for Hendricks County Parks & Recreation (HCP&R) to have a plan for what to do with the money. The HCCF would like to show evidence of progress to their stakeholders and future investors instead of just sitting on the money indefinitely. There is roughly \$376,000 in the fund at this time.

Rhodehamel pulled up the agreement signed by Glen and Mildred Harlos before they passed, and the language very specifically designates the money in the Harlos Fund to be used on the property parcel that used to belong to the Harlos family. If HCP&R wants to try to change that designation, they would have to go in front of the Indiana Attorney General's Office. Ivie expressed to the Park Board that he is adamantly opposed to taking this course of action, out of respect for the wishes of the Harlos family. The Park Board assured Ivie that they agree, and it would be only be done as the absolute last resort.

Ivie asked the Park Board to start thinking about possible projects for the north side of McCloud. He mentioned an idea that the HCP&R staff came up with: a suspension bridge across Big Walnut Creek to create a loop of trails connecting the north and south sides of the park, rather than having the single entry and exit point being the truss bridge. It would have to be a pretty long and elevated suspension bridge because of Big Walnut Creek's propensity to flood its banks significantly and regularly. Holtsclaw has also expressed that there may be some challenges with the terrain in that area of the park. Ivie suspects that a project like this would require some serious engineering.

Ivie further advised that the staff has always hesitated to open an entrance to the north side of the park because it is so remote that any amenities on the north side would likely become a party place and attract illegal and/or unwanted behavior, litter, police activity, etc.

Miner expressed interest in building a wooden staircase that leads to the site of Granny McCloud's old cabin, as well as some reforestation projects. He'd like to immediately use some of the spendable amount of the fund to locate the cabin. Lemley stated that he'd prefer to use money from the HCP&R budget for that rather than from the Harlos Fund.

Ivie suggested to the Park Board that they think about this matter, and it can be discussed again as an agenda item at a meeting in 2-4 months. Lemley offered to ask Rhodehamel to come to a Park Board meeting in the future to answer any questions. The Board liked that idea.

C-2. Vandalia Trail – Proposed Crop Lease with Eric George

Lemley advised that he would like to enter into another crop lease agreement with Eric George to farm the property along County Road 500 S. that the Park Board owns. It totals 54 acres, and the agreement would be for \$180/acre. Pell expressed concern about the price per acre, stating that the going rate for "poor ground" in 2022 for that area was \$211-\$295/acre. Lemley explained that the reason the price is so low is because it's such a narrow strip of land, plus acreage has been removed from the original lease because of the utility easement that was sold to Mill Creek Community School Corporation. Discussion was had on the topic. The Board would like to bid the per-acre price out in future years. **Miner moved to approve the crop lease for 54 acres at \$180/acre, with Lemley having the option to bump it up to the full 58 acres if Mill Creek Schools are done with the utility easement in time for planting season; seconded by Emsweller; motion passed 5-1 (Pell).**

C-3. W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park – Proposed Crop Lease with Dan Searcy

Lemley informed the Park Board that he would like to enter into another crop lease agreement with Dan Searcy to farm 34.5 acres in the undeveloped section of the park at the rate of \$210/acre. **Miner moved to approve the crop lease for 34.5 acres at \$210/acre; seconded by Freije; motion passed unanimously.**

D. PROPERTY UPDATES

D-1. McCloud Nature Park

Lemley thanked the Park Board for their efforts in organizing the upcoming Pancake Breakfast fundraiser at McCloud. He stated that Hendricks County Commissioner Dennis Dawes plans to attend this weekend.

Lemley reviewed the activities planned for Maple Syrup Days over the first two Saturdays in March, including the Maple Sap Run, Banning Engineering's sponsorship of a sap bucket, and the event being highlighted by the *Indy with Kids* publication.

Lemley informed the Park Board of the new backer that the maintenance crew created for the Giving Tree in the Nature Center, as well as the face lift to the park's entrance sign that the crew completed. Holtsclaw credited maintenance foreman Oather Duncan III for the design and creation of the backer.

Lemley reported 1,148 vehicles in McCloud Nature Park during the month of February, not including the last weekend of the month.

D-2. Vandalia Trail

Lemley updated the entire Park Board on Tony Murrain's visit to last month's meeting. Murrain does not want the trail to travel along the old railroad corridor and cross into the area next to his business lot. Instead, he wants HCP&R to route the trail south to County Road 500 S. and then cross Charles Arnold's property before entering the easement next to Murrain's business. Lemley stated that he is currently working on acquiring an easement through Arnold's property and has authorized a 100-year title search through Beam, Longest & Neff for the property. Lemley thinks that HCP&R can utilize the utility easement through Arnold's property; however, there is a small structure that is built about two feet into the easement, so Lemley imagines that Arnold might have an issue with HCP&R tearing the structure down. Murrain is not willing to sell the property or easement for the trail to enter Lambert Park until HCP&R has a written agreement with Arnold.

Lemley advised that the maintenance crew has been removing invasive plants along the trail, starting at State Road 75 and moving east. This is a project that will take some considerable time, as the infestation of invasives is quite substantial.

Lemley informed Midgley of the trail counter that has been installed on the equestrian trail, as well as the Park Board's consideration of allowing mountain bikes on the equestrian trail, based on a perception that the equestrian trail is very lightly used. The Board wants some trail usage data before making a decision, though, which is the reason for the trail counter. Midgley stated that when Friends of the Vandalia Trail operated the trail, they restricted hikers from being on the equestrian trail right outside of Amo as a courtesy to a homeowner there who did not want pedestrians right along her property fence where she keeps a horse. The rest of the equestrian trail was open to hikers, but not to bicyclists. Midgley warned against allowing bicycles and horses on the trail at the same time. He also expressed liability concerns due to the dangerous nature of mountain biking, and he recommended not opening the trail to bicyclists unless that section of the trail is managed by an experienced mountain biking organization. Lemley disagrees with the level of risk involved with mountain biking, acknowledging that injuries could happen but not agreeing that the danger is as significant as is being described by Midgley. Midgley said that if he was still managing the property, he would not change things, but he understands that it's now the Park Board's decision to make. Emsweller expressed concern about bicyclists trespassing on private property more than hikers would, and he suggested that the Park Board keep that in mind when making their final decision on the subject.

Pell left the meeting at 3:06 p.m. to attend a previously scheduled engagement. The Park Board maintained its quorum, so the meeting continued.

Lemley advised that the Coatesville Post Office removed their "reserved parking" signs from the parking lot as requested by the Park Board.

He reported that a Mexican restaurant is coming to Coatesville this year, located right near the Coatesville trailhead.

Lemley stated that he had a positive conversation with Mark Brenneman recently regarding how much Mark and his family enjoy the trail. He has offered to help HCP&R's efforts to expand the trail.

Lemley reported 1,377 trail users during the month of February, not including the last weekend of the month.

D-3. W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park

Lemley advised that he met with the West Central Quail Forever (WCQF) board of directors and supporting members on Feb. 6 to discuss potential WCQF financial support with the development of an 8-acre pollinator and habitat field in the currently undeveloped section of the park. Lemley feels that the discussion went well. WCQF will take HCP&R's request under advisement.

Lemley reported that he has received the construction design release for the maintenance hub from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, so the plans now go to the Town of Avon for issuance of building permits. Lemley anticipates construction of the hub to take place in late April or May.

Lemley informed the Park Board of some minor vandalism in the park, as well as a serial litterer.

HCP&R has never heard back from the Avon Police Department on any investigation of the theft that took place in the park right around Christmas, despite Hendricks County Sheriff Jack Sadler speaking to the APD Chief about the incident and lack of APD response.

Lemley stated that there will be a disc golf tournament in the park this weekend.

Lemley expressed some concern that an upcoming program about preparing fish for consumption might send a message to anglers that it's okay to clean fish at Bluegill Shelter and leave the remains there. He doesn't want the smell or mess or insects involved with fish remains to negatively affect the experience of someone who has reserved the shelter. The Park Board advised HCP&R to wait until there is a problem before worrying about it.

Lemley reported that he will be attending a long-term planning meeting with County officials later this month to discuss, among other topics, the fate of the East Campus Building where the HCP&R main office is located. He talked about a few options that are being considered for a new office location, including an option that HCP&R saves up its allocated budget monies for a few years to build an office at Gibbs. Lemley hesitates to go in that direction because it would stop park progress during those years, plus no other County department is required to fund the construction of their office from their own budget. Emsweller feels that it's the County's responsibility to locate and fund housing for the HCP&R main office, wherever that might be. Miner wants HCP&R to find a historic building in Danville to inhabit. Hayden said that an office in Gibbs makes sense, given the park's visitation numbers, as well as its proximity to the populated portion of Hendricks County and the fact that the Park Board already owns the land; Eisenhart agrees. Based on general impressions and not any specific estimates, Lemley ballparked the construction of an office at Gibbs to cost somewhere around \$3 million.

Lemley said that 2,289 vehicles visited W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park in February, excluding the last weekend of the month.

E. REPORTS

E-1. Superintendent Report

Lemley reported that the Summer 2023 issue of *The Explorer* is out to HCP&R's graphic designer right now and is scheduled to go to print by March 17. Hard copies should be delivered to the main office in mid-April. Ivie only ordered 7,000 copies, down from the usual 12,000 copies, given society's increased preference for electronic publications, which results in HCP&R recycling thousands of copies of each issue when they expire.

Holtsclaw has created an electronic database for safety data sheets (SDS), which will be a nice addition to HCP&R resources.

The Indianapolis Admirals Sailing Club has requested permission to sail their radio-controlled boats at Gibbs again this summer (July 2 to Sept. 2). Lemley will handle this in-house and will very likely approve their request, assuming that boat enthusiasts and anglers can find a way to coexist peacefully.

Lemley reports that HCP&R currently has about \$2,200 with the PFOHC that is earmarked for use on the wetland boardwalk at McCloud. Using that money, Ivie is going to spearhead the design and creation of an interpretive sign to place in front of the boardwalk, teaching park guests about wetland habitat.

Ivie informed the Park Board that Holtsclaw was recognized by the Hendricks County Commissioners yesterday for his 15 years of service to the County – all of which have been with HCP&R. He has since finished his 16th year and is now in his 17th year with the department, making him the longest-tenured employee with HCP&R by about 10 years over the second-longest-tenured employee. The Board thanked Holtsclaw for his service and dedication.

E-2. Naturalist Update

Wolf led a discussion on the preparations for Maple Syrup Days and the Pancake Breakfast fundraiser this weekend and next weekend.

She reported 74 registered participants for the Maple Sap Run on Saturday, which is really good for a first-year run.

Wolf provided an overview of the scheduled activities at Maple Syrup Days, as well as the rest of the programs and activities planned for March.

Ivie stated that Wolf and the rest of the naturalists were tasked with shaking things up at Maple Syrup Days after very low attendance last year. He said she and her staff have done exactly what was asked of them, and he's very happy to see the activities on tap for the festival. Ivie is hopeful for increased festival attendance this year as a result.

E-3. Budget Report

Ivie reported no problems with the 2023 budget.

Lemley informed the Park Board that he has authorized use of the spendable amounts in the Gibbs Fund and the HCP&R Fund through the HCCF. The Gibbs Fund spendable amount is about \$5,200 and will

be used to expand the crushed stone trails in the park. Lemley would also like to restripe the asphalt parking lots at Gibbs, along with the Vandalia Trail trailheads.

E-4. Parks Foundation of Hendricks County Report

Eisenhart reported that the PFOHC had a meeting last week and had Cliff Chapman, Executive Director of the Central Indiana Land Trust, there as a speaker. Chapman mentioned the Trust's involvement with the purchase of the McCloud properties. He also said that they are trying to purchase 570 acres in Putnam County, west of Greencastle, from a private owner for \$4.5 million.

He further reported that the PFOHC currently has \$47,000 to give away this year. Of that, \$25,000 comes from the HCCF, and the other \$22,000 comes from Subaru. Last year, the PFOHC gave away \$74,000. Other monies will become available throughout the year, but \$47,000 is what the PFOHC has available right now.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.

The next Park Board meeting will be held on April 5, 2023, at 2 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt Freije, Secretary