



Park Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 3, 2025
2:00 p.m.

355 South Washington Street
Danville, IN 46122

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

Board Present: Brad Eisenhart, President
Matt Freije, Secretary
Gary Emsweller
Paul Miner
Jeff Pell (arrived 2:10 p.m.)

Board Absent: Mike Hayden, Vice President
Vicky Byarley

Staff Present: Ryan Lemley, Superintendent
Eric Ivie, Assistant Superintendent
Ryann Hoffman, Senior Park Naturalist
Patty Seymour, Administrative Assistant

Guests: Catherine Puckett, HWC Engineering

A. CALENDAR

A-1. Adopt Agenda

Lemley requested adding item D-4. W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park – Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant Encumbrance to the agenda. **Freije moved to adopt the updated agenda; seconded by Miner, the motion passed unanimously.**

A-2. Approval of Minutes of June 4th Park Board Meeting

Pell moved to approve the minutes of the June 4th Park Board meeting; seconded by Miner; motion passed unanimously, with Freije abstaining due to absence.

A-3. Approval of Minutes of July 2nd Park Board Meeting

The minutes of the July 2nd Park Board meeting could not be approved because only five members were present at that meeting, and only three are in attendance today. Therefore, this matter will be tabled until next month's meeting.

A-3. Approval of Minutes of August 6th Park Board Meeting

Freije moved to approve the minutes of the August 6th Park Board meeting; seconded by Miner; motion passed unanimously, with Emsweller abstaining due to absence.

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS/PRESENTATIONS

B-1. Public Comments

None

B-2. 2026 – 2029 5-year Comprehensive Master Plan Interview

Ivie introduced Catherine Puckett from HWC Engineering to the Park Board and welcomed her to the discussion. HWC Engineering was hired to assist with developing the 2026–2029 Five-Year Comprehensive Master Plan, particularly focusing on the public input aspect. Part of this process involves gathering feedback from stakeholders about what they would like to see in the next five years. Catherine is the Director of Landscape Architecture at HWC Engineering.

Puckett explained that they have started the public survey process with an online survey available through several media outlets, which will remain open until mid-October. Additionally, they will host a booth at the upcoming Farmers Market event scheduled for September 6th, aiming to reach more individuals by partnering with this already popular HCP&R event. She mentioned that interviews have been conducted with department staff and County Commissioners, and they are in the process of scheduling interviews with County Council members. The goal is to gather key takeaways from these various interviews.

Puckett also asked the Park Board several questions related to the department, including what accomplishments and amenities they are most proud of, their views on growth and staffing needs, whether they prefer the parks to remain natural and passive or if they are open to other types of programming and recreation, areas needing attention or improvement, and if they believe any part of the county is underserved by HCP&R facilities or programming that should be expanded. The Park Board shared their responses with Puckett.

C. NEW BUSINESS

C-1. Proposed Private Program Guide

Senior Park Naturalist Ryann Hoffman presented a proposal to the Park Board for implementing a Private Program Guide. She explained that there has been a significant increase in requests for private programs from public and private school groups, as well as homeschool groups, with attendance exceeding 100 students for each program. Hoffman noted that these programs require substantial staffing, planning, and incur various costs. Currently, there are no fees associated with these programs.

These private programs are in addition to the regular educational and recreational programming that the naturalists already offer. Hoffman referred to the Private Program Guide previously provided to the Park Board, outlining the proposed topics, guidelines, and user pricing options.

The Park Board engaged in a discussion regarding several aspects of the proposed Private Program Guide. Board member Emsweller raised a concern about the acceptance of cash as a payment method, citing challenges related to cash management and possible risks. After further discussion, **Miner moved to approve the Private Program Guide as proposed, with the removal of cash as an accepted payment method. Pell seconded the motion; the motion passed unanimously.**

C-2. Revised Location for Park Board Meetings

Lemley proposed that the remaining Park Board meetings be held at the Gibbs Homestead, located at

4481 Gibbs Road in Danville. This site currently serves as their temporary office due to a directive from the previous County Facility Director and County Commissioners to vacate the East Campus Building until the new administrative office is built. The Park Board reached a consensus and approved Lemley's request to hold the meetings at the Gibbs Homestead starting in October.

D. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

D-1. Vandalia Trail – Award of Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant

Lemley announced that the Federal Government has approved a grant from the Land & Water Conservation Fund to expand the Vandalia Trail. This state-supported project will receive \$994,000 through the grant. Lemley praised Ivie for leading the grant application process. Once the grant is finalized, they will have three years to implement the project. The funds will be used to install 2½ miles of asphalt trail, extending from Michigan Street in Clayton westward to a point near C.R. 250 West along C.R. 500 South. Lemley hopes to begin implementing the project in 2027, depending on the availability of budgeted funds.

D-2. W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park – Public Restrooms

Lemley informed the Park Board that the subcontracted septic installer used a different material than what was previously approved for the force main sanitary sewer pipe. Lemley explained that, because of the size and scope of work outlined in the wastewater treatment system permit issued by the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH), the Hendricks County Health Department (the delegated inspector for the project) did not approve the substituted material for the force main. Lemley quickly coordinated with all involved parties to obtain approval for the substituted force main sewage line. Lemley expects the restrooms to be open to the public by mid-September.

D-3. W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park – Welcome Center & Administrative Office

Lemley informed the Park Board that he continues to meet with the design team working on the Welcome Center and Administrative Office for W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park. He brought attention to the design development budget document and highlighted the value engineering options provided by Patterson Horth. Lemley expects to receive the construction documents, which are 50% complete, in early September. He noted that the proposed bid budget is still in the preliminary stages and remains optimistic that some of the value engineering options can be adjusted if necessary. Additionally, Lemley is scheduled to meet with the Town of Avon Planning Department to initiate the development plan review process for the project.

D-4. W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park – Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant Encumbrance

Lemley informed the Park Board that the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is urging them to encumber the entire 140 acres of Gibbs Park to ensure it remains a public park indefinitely. This requirement comes from the National Park Service due to their support of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant for the development of Phase I of the park.

Lemley noted that, based on previous directives from DNR staff, the department leadership divided the newly developed park into two phases—Gibbs Park West and Gibbs Park East—before the construction of Phase I. He expressed concerns about encumbering the entire property, as it would restrict the types of facilities allowed in the western section of the park.

Recently, representatives from the National Park Service expressed dissatisfaction that the entire park is not included in the encumbrance. They will not release the final payment of the grant funds without this provision. Lemley provided the Park Board with possible options to reach a mutual agreement with DNR.

After further discussion, the Park Board approved Lemley's recommendation to include two additional areas of Gibbs Park in the encumbrance: the 22-acre field that contains the Hendricks County Bicentennial Tree Trail, and another field with an 8-acre Pollinator Garden. The 20+ acre field that houses the maintenance hub, along with the 20 acres designated for the future Welcome Center and Administrative Office, will be excluded from the encumbrance language. Lemley hopes this alternative solution will satisfy DNR and the National Park Service.

E. PROPERTY UPDATES

E-1. McCloud Nature Park

Lemley reported that the naturalist staff hosted a summer family campout at McCloud Nature Park in late August, with 14 families participating in the event. Unfortunately, one of the registered families caused ongoing issues during the campout, but the naturalist staff managed the situation responsibly.

Lemley informed the Park Board that the Hendricks County Sheriff's Department has officially issued a trespass warning to an individual who was exhibiting harassing behavior towards other park guests at McCloud Nature Park. Lemley mentioned that this individual has been addressed about such behavior on previous occasions.

TRAFx counters documented 1,671 vehicles visiting McCloud Nature Park this month.

E-2. Vandalia Trail

Lemley reported that they are nearing completion of Phase I of the eastern expansion of the Vandalia Trail, in collaboration with J.R. Bowling. He noted that there is still an outstanding balance of just over \$105,000 required to finalize the contractual services. This final payment will be deducted from the Development of County Parks (Innkeepers) budget line item. Once this payment is made, all funds received from the American Rescue Plan Act will be exhausted.

Lemley reported that week 11 of the countywide Summer Fun Run Series took place at Vandalia Trail. The maintenance crew had it in excellent condition for the event.

Lemley informed the Park Board that Paul Miner is reporting progress with the Indiana General Assembly. He has drafted a letter and plans to submit it after this meeting.

TRAFx counters documented 2,855 patrons visiting the Vandalia Trail this month.

E-3. W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park

Lemley reported that the maintenance staff has dedicated significant time and effort over the past several weeks to complete the installation of the crushed stone "200" tree trail for the Hendricks County Bicentennial Legacy project. A few tree species will be replaced, as they have died during the planting process. All of the tree species signs have been installed as well. Additionally, Lemley and Holtsclaw recently met with a representative from Bear's Lawn Care and Garden Center to discuss a proposed archway entrance for the tree trail project and reviewed a suitable vision for the archway.

For the seventh straight year, part of the Avon Junior Day of Caring will be held at W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park on Thursday, September 11th.

Lemley announced that the final Farmer's Market event will take place at Gibbs Park on September 6th, featuring over 30 registered vendors. HWC Engineering will also be present to promote the public input segment of the Comprehensive Master Plan and will conduct interviews with attendees at the event.

Katy Cummings, the Executive Director of the Parks Foundation of Hendricks County (PFOHC), will be producing a promotional video for their annual Picnic for the Parks fundraising event. Additionally, a separate video will be made at Gibbs Park to showcase the Grit Freedom Mobility Wheelchair program, with Vicky Byarley assisting with this project.

TRAFx counters documented 4,962 vehicles visiting W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park this month.

F. REPORTS

F-1. Superintendent Report

Lemley announced that the interview process for the part-time Naturalist Assistant position has been completed. A total of 69 applications were received for this role. Hannah Mossbarger will join the HCP&R team on Monday, September 15th. Mossbarger is a resident of Hendricks County and a recent graduate of Indiana Wesleyan University, where she earned a B.S. in Environmental Science. Ivie mentioned that Mossbarger completed a 10-week internship in Michigan, gaining valuable hands-on experience in animal ecology, agroecology, and fish and wildlife ecology management.

F-2. Budget Report

Ivie reported that the main focus is to get through the last four months of the year, with department leadership maintaining close communication regarding their respective budget lines. He noted that many of these budgets are starting to run low, and he will need to reallocate some funds in the next week or two. Unfortunately, Ivie believes they will have to tap into the Land Acquisition budget line (Food & Beverage) to cover some of this year's bills. He has been doing everything possible to avoid this situation, but it is beginning to seem inevitable as they gain clarity on the unpaid invoices that still need to be addressed. Ivie added that he does not foresee requesting additional appropriations from the County.

Ivie provided the Park Board with a summary of the Media Report for August, highlighting that the department website had 6,270 views. Social media continues to grow, with the department's Facebook page receiving nearly 110,000 views and Instagram just over 2,000 views. Ivie noted that Instagram media is still a work in progress and is relatively new for the department. The most popular posts on Facebook were the Vandalia Trail in Lambert Park post, which received 37,186 views, and the "Grilled T's at Farmers Market" post, which received 13,434 views.

F-3. Parks Foundation of Hendricks County Report

Eisenhart reported no new information from the Foundation at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

Miner moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:34 p.m.; seconded by Freije; motion passed unanimously.

The next regularly scheduled Park Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 1, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. at the Gibbs Homestead located at 4481 Gibbs Road, Danville, IN 46122.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt Freije, Secretary