



Park Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 4, 2026
2:00 p.m.

4481 Gibbs Road
Danville, IN 46122

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 p.m.

Board Present: Mike Hayden, Vice President
Matt Freije, Secretary
Vicky Byarley
Gary Emsweller
Paul Miner

Board Absent: Brad Eisenhart, President
Jeff Pell

Staff Present: Ryan Lemley, Superintendent
Eric Ivie, Assistant Superintendent
Patty Seymour, Administrative Assistant

Guests: None

A. CALENDAR

A-1. Adopt Agenda

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

A-2. Approval of Minutes of January 7th, 2026, Park Board Meeting

Miner moved to approve the minutes of the January 7th, 2026, Park Board meeting; seconded by Freije, the motion passed unanimously.

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS/PRESENTATIONS

B-1. Public Comments

None

C. NEW BUSINESS

C-1. McCloud Nature Park – Prescribed Prairie Burn

Lemley presented a proposed prescribed burn contract to the Park Board for the 52-acre prairie at McCloud Nature Park, with Turner Forestry in the amount of \$4,200.00, with a completion date of

April 19, 2026. Lemley highlighted the benefits of the burn, including improved condition of the prairie and reduction of wildfire risks. **Emsweller moved to allow Lemley to sign the prescribed prairie burn agreement as discussed in the amount of \$4,200.00; seconded by Freije, the motion passed unanimously.**

C-2. W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park – Builders’ Risk Insurance

Lemley reported that he initiated a conversation with John Parmley, the insurance agent for Hendricks County, regarding the need for builders' risk insurance for the upcoming construction of the Welcome Center and Administrative Office at W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park. He presented the Park Board with an insurance proposal from Parmley, provided by The Cincinnati Insurance Companies, which has a total term premium of \$12,371.00. Lemley mentioned that Parmley is still working with other insurance vendors to obtain competitive bids for this insurance.

After further discussion, **Miner moved to authorize Lemley to sign the builders’ risk insurance proposal at his discretion, contingent upon receiving lower bids from other vendors, as previously discussed, and ensuring that the total premium does not exceed \$12,371.00. The motion was seconded by Byarley and passed unanimously.** Lemley will present the approved insurance agreement to the Park Board at next month’s meeting.

C-3 Vandalia Trail – 2026 Housekeeping Contract

Lemley requested approval from the Park Board to sign and execute a contract with Kim Cartwright for cleaning and sanitizing the public restrooms at the Amo and Coatesville trailheads. The contract amounts to \$270.00 per week, with two cleanings scheduled each week from March 27, 2026, through December 1, 2026. After limited discussion, **Freije moved to approve Lemley's request. The motion was seconded by Emsweller and passed unanimously.**

D. PROPERTY UPDATES

D-1. McCloud Nature Park

Lemley reported that shortly after last month's Park Board meeting, he approved the structural inspection contract with JPS Engineering for Mill Cottage at McCloud Nature Park. The inspection determined that the building is structurally sound; however, some mold was discovered, which will likely require professional remediation. Lemley plans to share the report's findings with the Park Board once he receives them.

The naturalists completed the cleaning and organizing of Mill Cottage, filling another 20-yard dumpster with unwanted and unusable items. During the cleaning process, a hidden safe was discovered in the basement, concealed behind some shelving and a partial door. The safe was secured to the wall with concrete and mortar. After several unsuccessful attempts to have a locksmith come to the property, they decided to cut into the door to access the safe. Upon opening it, they found that the safe was completely empty.

Maintenance Foreman Oather Duncan is developing a manual system for opening and closing the shades in the Bee House at McCloud Nature Park. The original automatic system has been problematic from the beginning, prompting the search for alternative solutions.

Despite Hendricks County Government shutting down operations on January 26 due to heavy snowfall over the weekend and frigid temperatures, Oather Duncan came in to plow the park's driveways and parking lots. This ensured that staff and park visitors could access the property the following day.

Lemley informed the Park Board that officials in Putnam County are exploring the feasibility of

reopening the bridge along the Putnam/Hendricks County line road, which is adjacent to McCloud Nature Park.

TRAFx counters documented 681 vehicles visiting McCloud Nature Park this month.

D-2. Vandalia Trail

Lemley reported that they have been in communication with the Central Indiana Land Trust Inc. (CILTI) to develop a plan for better management of the 26,000 bare-root trees planted along C.R. 500 South last spring, between Michigan Street in Clayton and C.R. 250 West. The weeds on that property have become severely overgrown and unmanageable. A field team from CILTI will mark the trees and mow down the weeds during the winter. Following this, HCP&R maintenance crew will be responsible for managing weed growth throughout the 2026 growing season. CILTI plans to return in early fall to apply herbicide to the remaining weeds and will then plant an understory seed mix. This purchase has been generously funded by the Parks Foundation of Hendricks County.

Lemley announced that the Department of Natural Resources has signed the agreement for the \$994,000 L&WCF grant awarded for the eastern expansion of the Vandalia Trail.

Lemley provided an update to the Park Board regarding a proposed trail connection on a parcel owned by Ray Benson Jr. If approved, the trail will be installed off the Vandalia Trail, just east of S.R. 75 in Coatesville. Benson Jr. prefers the connection to be a grass path that links to the equestrian portion of the trail. The area is predominantly flat, making it an ideal location for this type of transition. Additionally, Benson Jr. has received approval from the Town of Coatesville to use their sewer conservancy easement in that area to access the trail. The Park Board had no objections to the proposed connection. Lemley will coordinate with Benson Jr.

Discussion took place regarding plowing trails after large snowfall events.

TRAFx counters documented 301 patrons utilizing the Vandalia Trail this month.

D-3. W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park

Lemley updated the Park Board on the status of the new Welcome Center and Administrative Office construction project. Patterson Horth is currently securing contracts with all low-bid vendors for the construction project.

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) recently conducted a mandatory sanitary survey of the public water system at Gibbs Park, which was installed last summer for the new restrooms. The onsite inspector indicated that the water system and quarterly sampling process should be satisfactory. However, the inspector's supervisor expressed concerns about the sample source tap process outlined in the inspector's report. Lemley explained the issue and outlined plans to address the deficiency. Lemley received a quote from John Hall Construction and will coordinate with them to install a cold-water sampling station to meet IDEM's new construction requirements.

Lemley provided the Park Board with an update on the status of the property deed revisions. These updates are necessary to accurately represent the encumbrance boundaries and include the legal language required by the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant. He will collaborate with Ben Comer to address the remaining legal tasks.

Lemley noted that a few neighbors from Gibbs Park expressed concerns about the clearing of invasive brush and dead trees and limbs that the maintenance staff has been conducting over the winter season.

One neighbor worried about the loss of the visual barrier that the brush previously provided, while another neighbor was concerned that this removal would negatively affect the wildlife habitat they enjoy viewing from their backyard. Lemley will coordinate with the maintenance staff to create areas that foster wildlife-sanctuary-type habitats.

Despite Hendricks County Government shutting down operations on January 26 due to heavy snowfall over the weekend and frigid temperatures, Maintenance Foreman Jason Kittle and Maintenance Technician Scott Hawkins came in to clear the park's driveways and parking lots. They also worked on the driveway and parking lot of the main office. Additionally, they hand-shoveled pedestrian access to both the main office and the Gibbs public restroom facilities. It was noted that the Gibbs sledding hill became extremely popular after the snowfall event.

Lemley informed the Park Board that they are still facing ongoing issues with the aging 2008 Bobcat skid steer. This equipment is essential for the department and has already incurred significant repair costs. Furthermore, they continue to face increasing expenses to keep it in working order. Lemley noted that they will likely request additional funding from the County Council in the 2027 budget year to purchase a new skid steer. Further discussions on this topic will take place as the next budget hearings approach.

TRAFx counters documented 2,451 vehicles visiting W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park this month.

E. REPORTS

E-1. Superintendent Report

Lemley reported that 39 applicants applied for the vacant Park Manager position. Additional discussion took place regarding job description requirements. Department leadership will review applicants, and interviews will be scheduled in the near future.

Ivie continues to make progress on the Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) and has received more input from their user base. A public presentation of the CMP will be scheduled for late February or early March. The final draft of the CMP is due by April 15th.

Lemley announced that Senator Brett Clark introduced a Senate Resolution honoring Park Board President Brad Eisenhart upon his retirement from Waste Management.

E-2. Budget Report

Ivie reported no issues or concerns with the budget to date. Discussion took place regarding a few line-item accounts.

E-3. Media Report

Ivie reported that social media traffic has decreased slightly, but this is not very concerning, as it is typical for this time of year. He mentioned that the naturalists are working on being more active on Instagram.

E-4. Parks Foundation of Hendricks County Report

The Park Board reviewed the current balances of available funds provided through the Parks Foundation of Hendricks County.

The Foundation will host its Picnic in the Park fundraising event at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds on March 6th. Lemley invited the Park Board to attend.

The Hendricks County Bicentennial Committee will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Bicentennial Legacy Tree Trail project on April 25th at 10:00 a.m. at W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park. Lemley invited the Park Board to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

Miner moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:12 p.m.; seconded by Freije, the motion passed unanimously.

The next regularly scheduled Park Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at the Gibbs Homestead located at 4481 Gibbs Road, Danville, IN 46122.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt Freije, Secretary