



Park Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 6, 2026
2:00 p.m.

4481 Gibbs Road
Danville, IN 46122

CALL TO ORDER

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

Board Present: Brad Eisenhart, President
Mike Hayden, Vice President
Matt Freije, Secretary (arrived at 2:08 p.m.)
Vicky Byarley
Gary Emsweller
Paul Miner
Jeff Pell

Staff Present: Ryan Lemley, Superintendent
Eric Ivie, Assistant Superintendent
Avery Tyler, Park Manager
Ryann Hoffman, Senior Park Naturalist
Alex Weidman, Park Naturalist
Patty Seymour, Administrative Assistant

Guests: None

A. CALENDAR

A-1. Adopt Agenda

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

A-2. Approval of Minutes of April 1, 2026, Park Board Meeting

Hayden moved to approve the minutes of April 1st, 2026, Park Board meeting; seconded by Miner, the motion passed unanimously.

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS/PRESENTATIONS

B-1. Public Comments

Ivie communicated with Sergeant Stanley of the Civil Air Patrol regarding a request to use W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park (Outlook Hill) for black powder model rocket launches. The activity will involve approximately 20 to 30 participants, aged 12 to 18, under adult supervision. The rockets could reach heights of around 1,000 feet and will adhere to the safety standards set by the National Association of Rocketry.

The Park Board discussed various topics related to fire safety concerns, insurance requirements, coordination with nearby airport airspace, the disc golf course, and the retrieval of launched rockets. By consensus, the Park Board approved to support the activity, pending proof of insurance and final staff approval.

C. NEW BUSINESS

C-1. McCloud Nature Park – Mill Cottage Inspection

Ivie reported significant mold contamination throughout Mill Cottage at McCloud Nature Park following an inspection by ServPro. Mold was discovered in the walls, ceilings, and subfloors at all levels of the structure. The initial remediation estimates totaled approximately \$66,771.00 and did not include asbestos removal or the additional repairs that would be necessary once the walls are opened.

Additional concerns included asbestos in the flooring, potential contamination of insulation, and water damage and rotting wood. There were also issues with inefficient heating and windows, leading to projected restoration costs that could exceed \$250,000.

In light of these findings, Lemley and Ivie recommended considering the demolition of the structure, along with replacement storage options such as a movable mini barn. Discussion took place regarding the possibility of preserving historic elements, such as fireplaces, mantels, and stonework, for reuse at the Nature Center.

By consensus, the Park Board directed staff to obtain demolition estimates, evaluate storage alternatives, and assess which materials could be salvaged.

C-2. McCloud Nature Park – Proposed Rough Terrain Trail

Tyler presented plans for a rough-terrain trail within the Harlos parcel at McCloud Nature Park. This new trail would connect the Locust Grove Trail to the Woodland Way Trail and would be approximately 0.49 miles long. During the discussion, topics included existing trails and terrain, stream crossings, trail difficulty signage, and the potential use of Harlos funds. Lemley noted that implementing the proposed trail would incur minimal costs and likely not require the use of Harlos funds at this time. By consensus, the Park Board agreed to proceed with installing the trail and updating the necessary maps.

D. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

D-1. 2026 – 2030 Comprehensive Master Plan – Park Board Authorization

Lemley announced that the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has approved the department's Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) for 2026–2030. The CMP will be available online, and printed copies, along with executive summaries, will be distributed to county leadership. **Miner moved to approve the Comprehensive Master Plan, and Emsweller seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.** President Eisenhart and Secretary Freije signed the documents to be submitted to the DNR.

E. PROPERTY UPDATES

E-1. McCloud Nature Park

Lemley reported that the water well pump supplying McCloud Nature Park and the Nature Center has been replaced, along with additional necessary work on the well.

The naturalist staff prepared and submitted a \$7,000.00 grant request for the Gary Emsweller Parks & Trails Grant. The Board of Directors of the Parks Foundation of Hendricks County (PFOHC) has

approved support for this grant request. The grant funds will be used to improve the bird-viewing area and create quiet reflection spaces within the Nature Center. Additionally, a live birding camera will be installed to stream activity from the viewing area. Maintenance staff have already begun work to enhance the outdoor bird-watching area adjacent to the Nature Center. The Park Board held a discussion regarding educational opportunities related to bird viewing.

Lemley informed the Park Board that Turner Forestry conducted a prescribed burn on the 52-acre prairie field at McCloud Nature Park on April 17th.

The naturalist staff collaborated with the Hendricks County Soil & Water Conservation District to host an invasive plant hike as part of their invasive species management efforts. The naturalists will continue to build on this initiative to improve the management of invasive species.

Stantec staff have resumed professional management of the arboretum this month, marking the final year of the professional services contract.

As of April 29th, TRAFx counters documented 1,524 vehicles visiting McCloud Nature Park this month.

E-2. Vandalia Trail

Lemley reported that the Easter Egg Hunt event held at the Coatesville Trailhead on April 4th was a success. Local businesses contributed by donating bicycles and prizes.

The maintenance staff is currently applying moss treatment in the shaded areas along the Vandalia Trail.

Lemley noted that the maintenance team is actively managing weed growth and overseeing reforestation efforts for the 26,000 bare-root trees that were planted last year as part of the eastern expansion of the Vandalia Trail.

A reimbursement of approximately \$13,000 has been received from the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) for original development of the trail (Putnam County line to Amo).

Lemley informed the Park Board that he had addressed an incident involving an individual who was found staying overnight in the restroom facility at the Coatesville Trailhead.

As of April 30th, the TRAFx counter recorded an estimated total of 1,146 patrons using the trail this month.

E-3. W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park

Lemley informed the Park Board that there are delays with the septic permitting due to accidental compaction of the septic field by a contracted bulldozer operator. Ongoing coordination is being conducted with Patterson-Horth and state health officials. Site work will continue, depending on weather conditions. Concerns regarding project delays and contractor coordination were discussed.

On April 22nd, Envita Solutions provided approximately 20 employee volunteers for its annual Earth Day tree-planting event. The maintenance team led the volunteers in planting 340 trees. Envita Solutions purchased and donated 140 3–5-gallon trees, while a local resident donated the other 200 bare-root trees.

Lemley reported that the primary sewage lift station pump for the main four-stall public restroom had failed and required repairs. However, the secondary/emergency pump continued operating, allowing the restrooms to remain open while repairs were underway.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Bicentennial Tree Trail took place on Saturday, April 25th, at the Firefly Pavilion in Gibbs Park.

As of April 30th, TRAFx counters documented 4,310 vehicles visiting W.S. Gibbs Memorial Park this month.

F. REPORTS

F-1. Superintendent Report

Lemley reported that the department's website had crashed for unknown reasons. Although Ivie was able to restore the site from a backup version, it took a significant amount of time to upload documents that were missing from the backup. Ivie does not believe that the crash was targeted by hackers; he suspects it may be related to some flaws in the automatic software update. He is taking additional measures to ensure the backup versions remain up to date.

Lemley also mentioned that the vacant Part-time Maintenance Technician position will be advertised until May 15th. He reminded the Park Board that the performance review window will be open from May 1st to May 30th. President Eisenhart will accept comments from Park Board members and will conduct Lemley's employee performance review during this period.

Additionally, Lemley informed the Park Board that Commissioner Gentry approached him to discuss the potential acquisition of a campground property near Jamestown.

There are ongoing discussions about conservation and beautification opportunities along the Ronald Reagan Parkway corridor in the Brownsburg area, which could lead to a future raptor preservation project.

Lastly, Lemley reported that pond maintenance services, which were initially planned to be handled through HWC Engineering, will instead be managed internally after further evaluation.

F-2. Budget Report

Ivie reported no issues with the budget so far, but noted that concerns regarding the timing of the Innkeeper's Tax revenue distributions have been resolved with assistance from the Auditor's office.

Lemley mentioned that he has been encouraged to explore potential funding requests for the eastern expansion of the Vandalia Trail Phase 2 project during the 2027 budget hearings.

F-3. Media Report

Ivie reported that social media posts about the prescribed prairie burn at McCloud Nature Park received strong engagement. The posts also performed well for the Easter Egg Hunt events and the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Bicentennial Tree Trail. Ivie noted that the staff is continuing their efforts to boost engagement on Instagram.

ADJOURNMENT

At 3:08 p.m., Hayden moved to adjourn the meeting, and Freije seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The next regularly scheduled Park Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 3, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at the Gibbs Homestead located at 4481 Gibbs Road, Danville, IN 46122.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt Freije, Secretary