CHARLEVOIX COUNTY PARKS COMMITTEE
Monday – April 15, 2019
Meeting Location:
Charlevoix County Building
Commissioners’ Room
203 Antrim St.
Charlevoix, MI 49720

Members Present:
Committee Members: Susan Vrondran, Tim Wieland, and Amanda Wilkin.

Members Absent: Dennis Jason, Brian Williams, Ryan Novotny, and Caroline Kobylczak.

Staff: Parks and Planning Director Kiersten Stark, Parks Manager Ross Maxwell, Administrative Assistant Lauren Richards, Shirley Roloff (County Commissioner), and Kevin Shepard (County Administrator).

Public: Aaron Nordman (Performance Engineers) and Crystal Batdorff (Performance Engineers)

Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance:
A quorum of the Parks Committee was not present for the meeting.

The unofficial meeting of the Charlevoix County Parks Committee was called to order at 5:40 pm on April 15, 2019 at the Charlevoix County Building by K. Stark.

Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance was led by K. Stark.

Approval of Agenda:
N/A

Public Comment:
K. Shepard shared an overview of the Parks Millage Applications. He said the County received a total of 18 applications. K. Shepard pointed out a few new projects including: fire rings, batting cages, adult tricycles, and fat-tire wheelchairs.

K. Shepard shared the following statistics regarding the Parks Millage:
• In the past five years, a total of 59 projects have been funded (over $460,000).
• Of the 59 projects, townships received funding for 40 projects and cities received funding for 19.
• He explained the breakdown is approximately 70% to the townships and 30% to the cities which is comparable to both population percentages and tax revenue percentages.

K. Shepard said every eligible project has been funded thus far, but this may not always be the case in the future.
S. Vrondran thanked K. Shepard for doing research and providing statistics to the Parks Committee. She asked if K. Shepard has ever considered contacting the townships that have not been successful in receiving funding. K. Shepard said he encourages all cities and townships to participate; only four townships haven’t participated (Chandler, Marion, Norwood, and Hudson). He said the County had been discussing a potential project with Norwood Township, but they didn’t submit an application and he is unsure why. T. Wieland said he is shocked Norwood Township isn’t trying to get funding for their beach (Township Park).

Additional discussion took place regarding the application process for the Parks Millage.

K. Shepard said the County’s Parks Millage program isn’t very common and the County is always trying to tweak it to make things easier for applicants.

A. Wilkin said she is concerned about the lack of involvement from the Parks Committee. K. Shepard said we don’t want to present the program with a conflict of interest and do not want there to be a perception of bias that will lead to losing the program.

K. Shepard exited the meeting due to a scheduling conflict.

**Approval of Minutes:**
N/A

**Financial Reports:**
K. Stark reviewed the financial reports with the Parks Committee.

R. Maxwell said we have already brought in $14,541 in campground reservations VS approximately $7,000 last year. He said this could be due to the accessibility of the new reservation system. We also began taking reservations earlier this year.

S. Vrondran asked why we aren’t spending the money we have budgeted for the parks. K. Stark explained what the funds were for (operational) and that if we would like to work on specific (capital) projects, she will need to work them into the next budget year which begins in October.

S. Vrondran said she would like to see more done with grounds and maintenance at Porter Creek Natural Area and Thumb Lake Park.

S. Vrondran asked if projects need to go through the Building and Grounds Committee. R. Maxwell said anything over $500. K. Stark explained how the budget works.

T. Wieland asked if new trail signs were ever purchased. K. Stark said L. Richards did some sign updates this summer. R. Maxwell said things are prepared at Porter Creek to add on to the trail as well.

**Manager’s Report:**
R. Maxwell reported the following:
- Whiting Park
  - The Campground opens May 10th.
  - All the buildings flooded this spring. It was the first year the log cabin has ever flooded.
  - The County Maintenance crew is now responsible for maintenance repairs at Whiting Park. The boiler is currently being repaired.
- Porter Creek Natural Area
  - R. Maxwell plans to go out and lock the gate.
- Thumb Lake Park
  - Portable restrooms will be installed before Memorial Day.
  - There is a lot of snow at the park still.
- Little Traverse Wheelway
  - R. Maxwell drove the whole trail.
  - He removed downed trees with assistance from Josh Cline (Charlevoix County Maintenance Employee).
  - R. Maxwell and J. Cline also repaired the boardwalk.
  - We have contracted with a power sweeper to sweep/remove gravel along ALL non-motorized trails. He said this is a smaller sized sweeper.

S. Vrondran asked if they were going to work on the Boyne City to Charlevoix Non-motorized trail too. K. Stark said yes.

- Boyne City to Charlevoix Non-motorized Trail
  - R. Maxwell drove Phase One and there is a lot of snow still.
  - He also drove the section that is in the State Park and there was one downed tree that he cleared.
  - R. Maxwell has also been attending interviews for the new Parks Manager and Seasonal Park Rangers.

K. Stark described the interview process, which has been very time consuming. The position has been filled. The candidate will be graduating this May from Lake Superior State University with a Parks and Recreation Degree. She has worked for the DNR at some of the State Parks as well. She will begin as the new Parks Manager on May 13th, so K. Stark will be helping to fill the time gap, as Ross will be retiring at the end of April.

Additional discussion took place regarding the new Parks Manager and the transitional phase.

**Old Business**

**Boyne City to Charlevoix Non-motorized Trail Status Report**

K. Stark reported the following:

- **Phase One**
  - She submitted the final grant reimbursement request to the DNR.
  - She received approval to have the trail power swept to remove dirt and gravel leftover from winter. This will take place prior to Memorial Day weekend.
  - The new landscaping will be planted along the trail within the Boyne City limits before Memorial Day. K. Stark discussed the specs with someone from OHM
Advisors regarding the landscaping, and she had asked OHM Advisors to oversee the planting and be available to provide guidance to the landscaping company.

R. Maxwell said the fallen trees Dorne Davis (adjacent property owner) put along the trail within the Boyne City limits have primarily fallen down. K. Stark said she will be calling Mr. Davis soon regarding the new landscaping. Additional discussion took place.

- **Phase Two**
  - The final grant reimbursement request has been submitted to the DNR.
  - K. Stark said this section needs the power sweeping the most.

- **Phase Three**
  - She submitted the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant application to the DNR. She said they will provide us with a preliminary score and we will have an opportunity to make changes to the application to earn more points. She said she may try to go to Lansing in December if we have an opportunity to present our application to the Trust Fund Board.

R. Maxwell asked if K. Stark did some coordination with any cities or townships to earn more points on the grant application. K. Stark said she hadn’t had an opportunity to do that, but it may be an option in the future.

  - Gosling Czubak was selected to do the detailed design and construction engineering. Once we have signed a contract, Gosling Czubak will begin work. They will do preliminary engineering this summer and will do detailed engineering next year if we receive the Trust Fund grant.

K. Stark said she will be working with Gosling Czubak to identify places where the trail could possibly be placed further from the road. Gosling Czubak said they would provide her with assistance in contacting property owners to discuss potential easements.

Discussion took place regarding a potential easement from Mr. Dow along Phase Four.

**Whiting Park Boat Launch – Status Update:**
K. Stark reviewed the conceptual drawing from last month’s meeting and then presented a new conceptual drawing with an alternate exit route and additional parking. The new drawing allows parking spaces to be more accessible and allows for overall better flow.

A. Nordman said he and C. Batdorff came up with this plan, based on concerns expressed by K. Stark regarding traffic flow and parking. He likes the new layout better than the old one.

T. Wieland asked how much more wetland impact this drawing has. A. Nordman said approximately 10-15% more, which isn’t much.

S. Vrondran asked if there would be a lot of runoff. A. Nordman said they will redirect water with a culvert and they can create pocket green areas with the areas of vegetation within the loop.

R. Maxwell pointed out the new drawing has a larger footprint.
S. Vrondran asked if we could do a gravel drive if we cannot afford to pave it. A. Nordman said no, because the drive will wash out; however, paving will cost quite a bit more. Gravel would also not provide adequate traction for vehicles, given the steep slope.

A. Nordman said if the launch is going to be popular, more pavement and parking supports the two-lane boat launch better.

A. Wilkin likes the new drawing and the pull-through parking.

S. Vrondran asked if Steve Voice has seen the drawings. K. Stark said no. A. Nordman said the conceptual drawing they are presenting tonight is a new development.

T. Wieland asked how much more the boat launch will cost with the additional paving. A. Nordman said the new drawing will be approximately $25,000 more. K. Stark said the total project would be approximately $275,000.

K. Stark told the Parks Committee about a DNR Waterways grant opportunity that is in addition to the grant we already have in place.

S. Vrondran asked what the grant deadline was. K. Stark said it is April 1st, so we would need to apply next year.

R. Maxwell said this boat launch is not what we had originally envisioned. K. Stark said we went with a two-lane launch because the Sheriff expressed concern about the size due to the popularity of the Sommerset Pointe boat launch when it was open to Township residents.

K. Stark said she thinks it is important for people to have the option to circle around. L. Richards said there is a safety concern if there is only one entry and exit and the area is all backed up; emergency vehicles will not be able to access the area.

S. Roloff said she wants local boaters to have an opportunity to come back and voice their opinions. K. Stark agreed. R. Maxwell said they will want more parking spaces.

K. Stark said if we want to construct this year, we need to start moving through the process now. The other option is to get input from local boaters this summer and apply for another grant from the DNR Waterways next spring and plan on constructing next fall (2020).

A. Wilkin said she wanted the boat launch to be constructed this fall, but thinks waiting may be a better option.

K. Stark said waiting will not affect our current DNR Waterways grant because they gave us three years to get the launch constructed.

K. Stark thinks it would be good for local boaters to see the new drawing because they have not seen any drawings with the loop design.
S. Vrondran asked if Steve Voice has moved forward with the process at all. K. Stark said she just recently received the wetland delineation report from him.

A. Nordman said he recommends moving forward with permitting for a large boat launch and scale it down if needed.

T. Wieland said he thinks local boaters should have an opportunity to provide input as well.

**New Business**

**Recreation Plan – Status Update and Discussion**

K. Stark reported the following:

- We received proposals from two planning firms and she is hoping we receive one from Networks Northwest as well. Networks Northwest was short on staffing, but recently hired a new Planner and said they may be able to take on another project.
- By the end of the month, she would like to schedule a Recreation Plan sub-committee meeting to review proposals and determine who they would like to interview. The sub-committee will then present a recommendation.
- K. Stark had L. Richards distribute copies of the Capital Improvement Plan from the current Recreation Plan that K. Stark had organized based on facility.

S. Roloff exited the meeting.

- K. Stark reviewed the Capital Improvement Plan.

K. Stark said they are going to put Phase 4 and 5 of the Boyne City to Charlevoix Trail out for engineering bids prior to doing any of the preliminary engineering this time. The Hayes Township Parks and Recreation Committee wants to work with the Parks Committee on Phase 4 & 5 as well.

T. Wieland asked when K. Stark thinks Phase 5 will be constructed. K. Stark said it will be until at least 2025.

K. Stark said grant agencies are looking for more detailed plans than in the past and are requiring more planning, public input, and detailed information earlier in the process. The County will be responsible for paying for preliminary engineering that will not be grant reimbursable. She said we can look at more grant opportunities to cover the preliminary engineering; possibly the Charlevoix County Community Foundation. The Trails Council and Tart Trails obtained a grant to fund the preliminary engineering for the Traverse City to Charlevoix Trail.

S. Vrondran asked if the Recreation Plan sub-committee meetings would be held at night. K. Stark said they could be held at night or during the day; her schedule is flexible. S. Vrondran asked if an additional person from the Parks Committee could commit to being an alternate just in case. T. Wieland said he could.

**Advocacy Report:**

S. Vrondran said she regularly contacts township Clerks and Parks and Recreation Directors but has struggled with getting them to respond. She said she encourages all cities and townships to apply for
the Parks Millage and lets them know the Parks Committee is here to help as needed.

T. Wieland said Hudson and Chandler Township seem to be the two that are struggling the most with the application process. Discussion took place regarding Hudson Township’s Parks Millage applications.

**Whiting Park Rule Changes – Status Update**

K. Stark presented the proposed rule changes that she took before the Building and Grounds Committee.

- She said there was controversy over rule 5. One Building and Ground Committee member said people should only be able to stay for more than 2 weeks when it’s not peak season. K. Stark said we may need to wait until next year to implement this rule.

R. Maxwell said we just need to contact Sunrise and let them know what the new rule is, so they can adjust the reservation system.

- K. Stark said most of the other changes are the same as what was discussed at last month’s Parks Committee meeting.

R. Maxwell asked T. Wieland about potential damage caused to boats if we require boaters to anchor their boats at the bow and stern. T. Wieland said anchoring the boats overnight could be an issue depending on the number of boats anchored as well.

A. Wilkin asked what happens if the wind changes. K. Stark said if the boats only have one anchor they should all swing the same direction.

K. Stark asked R. Maxwell where boaters anchor their boats overnight. R. Maxwell said they anchor near the kayak launch. R. Maxwell said he has never had any issues with anchoring before.

- K. Stark said the Building and Grounds Committee wanted her to contact the County’s Legal Counsel regarding rules 21 and 24. Bryan Graham (Charlevoix County Legal Counsel) said rule 24 is fine; there can be a rule against having off road vehicles (ORV’s) in the campground even though they are now allowed on County roads. This is a policy decision for the County to make. He also said rule 21 regarding firearms in the Park is a policy decision for the County.

K. Stark said B. Graham told her that the only way any of the rules can be enforced is if the County Board adopts them as an ordinance.

T. Wieland said he would like to see rule 21 adjusted.

S. Roloff jointed the meeting again.

T. Wieland said he likes the rule change regarding the checkout time. He said you need to have time to maintain sites.
A. Wilkin pointed out a grammatical error in rule 8. K. Stark said one of the Building and Grounds Committee members had her change the wording from “are” to “is”.

R. Maxwell asked why we are only allowing 2 cars per campsite. K. Stark said that has always been the rule. Discussion took place regarding the number of vehicles allowed per campsite.

R. Maxwell pointed out the time visitors need to leave the park is 11:00pm which is later than most campgrounds.

R. Maxwell told K. Stark the building rental forms need to be updated. He has some samples for comparison. R. Maxwell said if building rentals are going to be added to the reservation system there should be a “click here to accept terms” button.

S. Roloff asked if rule 21 had been discussed. K. Stark explained the feedback she received from B. Graham. S. Roloff said she thinks concealed weapons are okay, but she is uncomfortable with open carry because it is a family campground.

K. Stark told S. Roloff they discussed rule 24 as well and provided S. Roloff with an overview.

Public Comment
S. Vrondran thanked R. Maxwell for his 16 years of service. S. Vrondran reviewed projects R. Maxwell has done for the County Parks over his years of service. R. Maxwell was presented with outdoor gifts as a token of Parks Committee Members and Staff appreciation for his work.

Meeting Adjourned:
The meeting was adjourned at 7:40pm.

The next regular meeting will be at 5:30pm on May 20, 2019 at the Green Building at Whiting Park.

Minutes Submitted by:
Lauren Richards