

MECOSTA COUNTY PARK COMMISSION  
November 12, 2009

The November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009 meeting was called to order by the Chairman at the Administrative Office in Paris, MI at 7:00 p.m. MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Cookingham, Mrs. Fitzgerald, Mrs. Howard, Mr. Jefts, Mr. Peek, Mr. Stout, Mrs. Strong (arrived at 7:45) Mr. Todd and Mr. Wayer. MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Nichols. Also present: Gary Brown, Erin Bean and Karen Morningstar.

Assistant Superintendent thanked the Board for the purchase of the tree in her Grandfathers memory. This tree was recently planted at Merrill Lake Park on her parents' seasonal campsite.

**Minutes: October 8, 2009 Board Meeting:** Mr. Cookingham moved, seconded by Mr. Stout to accept the minutes of the October 8, 2009 Board Meetings with correction. Motion Carried.

**October 26, 2009 Union Committee Meeting:** Mr. Wayer moved, seconded by Mr. Jefts to accept the minutes of the October 26, 2009 Union Committee Meeting as presented. Mr. Wayer reviewed the minutes with the full board and informed them of the Union Correspondence wishing to not open negotiations and continuing under the current contract. Mr. Wayer asked if the Board would like to open negotiations? Chairman acknowledged this should be discussed in Committee. Motion carried.

**October 27, 2009 Rules and Regulations Committee Meeting:** Mr. Stout moved, seconded by Mrs. Howard to accept the minutes of the October 27, 2009 Rules and Regulations Committee Meeting as presented. Motion carried. Mr. Wayer moved, seconded by Mrs. Howard to accept the amendments to the Rules and Regulations. Mr. Wayer declared section 7f should be changed for disturbing the peace to cover any time not just quiet hours. Mr. Wayer moved, seconded by Mrs. Howard to withdraw the motion. Rules and Regulations Committee will schedule another meeting to finalize the amendments to be approved by the Park Commission before forwarding them to the County for their approval.

**November 10, 2009 Finance Committee Meeting:** Mr. Cookingham moved, seconded by Mr. Todd to accept the minutes of the November 10, 2009 Finance Committee Meeting contingent on the decision of the Board regarding the Brower Manager position and wood. Motion carried. Mr. Cookingham explained the Non Union fulltime staff wages were proposed an increase of 2.5%. The Brower Manager position weighed heavily on everyone and much discussion followed regarding hiring a fulltime park manager continuing with the position as seasonal. Pros and cons for each were discussed. Mr. Wayer declared with the County approving a 2.5% increase for their staff, we are not tied to that and informed the Board of Central Dispatch having revenue issues and their employees were offered less than that. Mr. Wayer asked for a recommendation from the Finance Committee regarding the wage increase for the non-union employees. Mr. Cookingham avowed the finance committees recommendation is 2.5%, same as the County.

**Public Comment:** None.

### Reports and Updates:

**Haunted Hatchery:** Superintendent reported the group would have had their best weekend ever. with a 40 minute wait line up, on Halloween weekend until power was lost due to the windstorm.

**End of Season Closings:** Brower Park was closed on October 25<sup>th</sup> without incident and a total of \$43.00 cash short and no ice shortage. School Section was cash over of \$5.75 with one bag of ice missing, Merrill was reported to be \$29.00 cash short with Paris wrapping up the parks with \$22.50 cash short overall

(\$20 pop refund and \$2.50 in buttons). Mr. Wayer asked about the Farmers Market. Superintendent reported the vendors pay \$10/week and the event held every Saturday was a success. Mrs. Howard affirmed it is a win, win, win situation. Superintendent affirmed the Market Master has the authority to inspect and reject items to be sold by the vendors. No complaints were heard of the event. Chairman affirmed this is good exposure for the park.

*Chamber of Commerce – Rise & Shine:* Superintendent reported of our membership since 1999 not being taken advantage of and proposed to host an event in Paris Park this coming summer which attracts around 45-60 people. This event could be held on the Stage and would give us an opportunity to let everyone know what we have to offer. Coffee, juice and donuts are usually served. If the Board is interested, we need to get on the schedule to take part in this great opportunity. Chairman avowed this would also be good exposure for the parks. Mr. Todd moved, seconded by Mr. Cookingham to support a Rise & Shine event this coming summer in Paris Park. Motion carried unanimously.

*Union Negotiations:* were discussed earlier.

*Wood:* Mr. Stout commented he has not been in favor of this policy for quite some time. We are the only park system to continue with this policy. Revenue lost from guests is unknown. We are in competition with all other parks and he is in favor of discontinuing this policy. Chairman stated other parks have stopped for a while and the policy was put in place due to the Emerald Ash Borer. Mr. Cookingham feels the overnight guests will continue to purchase wood from the parks. Mrs. Fitzgerald added she is also in favor of discontinuing with this policy and felt certain guests will continue to depend on the vendors, however, now they won't hesitate to come to the parks. Chairman stated this board makes rules for what is best for the public. Mr. Wayer asked for the opinion of the Superintendent and Asst. Superintendent. Asst. Superintendent informed the Board of several phone calls from upset guests and she is interested in getting more people camping. Guests will be pleased to have the Board hear their complaints on wood. Superintendent added guests have asked for four years to abandon this policy. The loss in revenue cannot be tracked and abandoning this policy would be good for the parks. Mr. Stout moved, seconded by Mr. Cookingham to allow guests to bring in their own campfire wood into our parks. Motion carried unanimously. Chairman avowed this is a step in the right direction.

*Incident Accident Reports:* none.

*Fulltime Brower Manager Position:* Superintendent presented a spreadsheet detailing the cost difference of a Fulltime Manager vs. Seasonal. Mr. Wayer questioned finding a good candidate for \$9.77-\$10.85 per hour. Chairman added Brower Park is difficult to manage and is also concerned with the wages. Seasonal wage steps were discussed. Chairman asked what the Board felt the wage should be? Mrs. Fitzgerald asked what the pros were of hiring fulltime. We have a greater chance of hiring a higher level person by offering benefits. Mr. Wayer remembers for several years being told we need a fulltime manager at Brower and in the winter months, this individual will have plenty of work and now questions whether this is in fact the case. Mr. Cookingham affirmed that is not what the Finance Committee is saying. Chairman felt we were fortunate to make it this year with a seasonal manager at Brower Park. Mr. Cookingham confirmed if the Board is interested in hiring a fulltime park manager for Brower, Chairman stated this Board should look at candidates' applications in December and interview in January. Superintendent liked the comments coming from the Board and now has a good understanding of how to utilize two managers in the office during the off season months. Chairman avowed the new staff should be on board by February. Superintendent affirmed we are close to balancing the budget with both wood and this manager position. Superintendent affirmed the Finance Committee currently has more projected revenue than expense at this time (including the wood and manager) and with this determination, if the Board decides to hire a fulltime manager, the budget allows for additional funds of

\$19,220 to be sent to MERS or if the Board determines a seasonal manager would be sufficient for another year, the budget allows for a projected figure of \$32,700 to be possibly sent to MERS to aid with the fund balance. Mrs. Strong affirmed we need to be prepared, we need a fulltime park manager to assist with grants, programming, etc. Finance Committee has recommended to set the new fulltime managers starting wage at \$23-25,000. Mr. Todd moved, seconded by Mrs. Strong to hire a fulltime park manager for the 2010 season with a starting wage of \$23-25,000.00. Motion carried unanimously.

**Correspondence:** Two letters were reviewed. Sue Moeggenborg sent a letter asking for several issues to be dealt with. One concern was wood. Another was jet skis and large boats being moored at School Section. Superintendent informed the Board, these watercraft are from other residents on School Section Lake who boat over to the park, moor on our posts and utilize the park for the day and then leave. Chairman avowed the shoreline could be restricted to guests who are currently camping in the park, these are our posts, at least limit the most desirable ones for our guests. Mr. Cookingham added this could be another revenue source. Superintendent suggested sending this issue to Rules and Regulations Committee. Chairman directed him to come with a plan. SSLPOA - Mrs. Fitzgerald acknowledged the last paragraph asks for help with weed control. Asst. Superintendent affirmed we have been doing this for several years. Mrs. Howard confirmed she has been contacted with a request to have this Board take a longer view with helping SSLPOA. Chairman added this is not a fixed cost. Mr. Cookingham moved, seconded by Mrs. Howard to approve \$500 to help purchase fish for the 2010 season. Motion carried unanimously. Mr. Cookingham added this would be a nice ad to place that we support the fish stocking of School Section.

**Financial:** Revenue vs. Expenses was reviewed. *Adjustments:* After review of the line item spreadsheet, current transfers needed were: Acct. #727 -\$431.84, #741 - \$328.00, #744 - \$61.48, #780 - \$357.29, #801 - \$287.50, #862 - \$94.25, #934 - \$448.96, #957 - \$100.00 and #958 - \$1315.00, for a total of \$3,424.32 with transfers coming from the following accounts to balance: #990 - \$3,424.32. Mr. Jefts moved, seconded by Mrs. Strong to transfer the stated amounts from line items listed to balance. Motion carried.

**Approval of Bills:** Mr. Jefts moved, seconded by Mr. Cookingham, for the approval of the bills, including customary & ordinary and the transfer of funds. Motion carried by roll call vote. Mr. Jefts added staff was directed to take care of the credit card in the name of Dave Basch.

- ❖ The Executive Secretary gave the financial report.
- ❖ Set-Asides: were reviewed.

**MERS:** Superintendent reported a large payment is needed to be sent to MERS. Our fund has went from 85-95% funded to in the 70's. Superintendent has spoke with the County Controller who adds any additional payment can help. Superintendent suggested to send a payment of \$20,000 this year and more in 2010. By 2015, we are projected by MERS contribute \$45-50,000 per year to bring our fund balance up to where it needs to be. Chairman asked to have the Finance Committee review the MERS payment and come back to the next meeting.

**End of Season Report:** Superintendent presented a spreadsheet detailing the revenue, expense, allocations and net for each park from 2005-2009. Superintendent proudly noted Paris Park is now out of the red along with Davis Bridge, however, Merrill Lake Park is now in the red. Mr. Cookingham confirmed we need to look closely at Merrill. Chairman added we need to hear comments from campers and look for improvements. Paris Park with 2-3 weekend events could potentially bring in another \$3-5,000. With a low economy, this is a good park to come to. Superintendent reminded the Board Paris was running very good on occupancy - (at 100% on non holiday weekend) and requested to have the events scheduled for the shoulder season. Merrill however was running at 70% occupied which was

considered a busy weekend. Chairman suggested offering the two cabins in primitive as prizes at the shows.

**Public Comment:** Mrs. Fitzgerald questioned if we had purchased the maps that were being discussed earlier in the year. Assistant Superintendent provided a map to every Board member and added they were not available during the summer months; however, we do now have them for the shows and for next couple of summers.

**Other Business:**

*Masterplan Committee Meeting Date and Time.* Mr. Jeffs tentatively set the meeting date and time for December 2, 2009 at 1:00 and will confirm with staff when he obtains his schedule from his office.

*Union Committee Meeting Date and Time.* Was set for November 19, 2009 at 1:00. Mr. Nichols is to be informed.

*Finance Committee Meeting Date and Time.* Was scheduled for December 3, 2009 @ 9:00 a.m.

*Christmas Party.* Board members contributed \$3.00 each towards hors d'oeuvres for the December meeting.

*Adjournment:* Mrs. Fitzgerald moved, seconded by Mr. Cookingham to adjourn at 9:09 pm. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Jackie Fitzgerald  
Secretary