Mecosta County Park Commission
Commission Meeting

The March17th, 2026, Commission Meeting of the Mecosta County Park Commission was called to order at the Mecosta County Services Building at 5:00 p.m. by the Commission Chairman, Mr. Stanek.

1. Roll Call

Members Present: Mrs. Bradstrom, Mr. Griffith, Mr. Hatkowski, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Vogel, Mr. Zimmerman, Mr. Lambrix, Ms. Miller and Mr. Stanek.
Members Absent: Mrs. Strong.
Others Present: Jeff Abel – Superintendent, Taylor Jutila – Operations Director, Jamie McConnell – Operations Manager, Brenda Goldammer – HR, Marketing, and Events, and Kimberly Erickson – Administrative Office Clerk.

2. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Stanek added a second item to Section 6, item b. We will discuss Park Managers residing at the campgrounds 24/7 during the season.
Mr. Lambrix asked about CPR training for staff. Ms. Jutila answered that training is scheduled and will be offered to all incoming and current staff. Mr. Lambrix would like to be included in this training and asked for the schedule to be sent to him. Ms. Jutila will send that information to him via email.
The agenda was approved with the addition to section 6.

3. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Vogel motioned, supported by Mrs. Bradstrom, to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2026, Park Commission meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Comment

None

5. Reports and Updates

a. Superintendent's Updates

- **mParks Conference –** Took place the 1st week of March in Lansing. I presented a session along with members of Ottawa County Parks with the topic of Campground and Lodging Operations and Management Best Practices/Roundtable Discussion. After 3-years serving as Vice-President of MACPRO, I will no longer be serving in that capacity due to time constraints. Taylor has accepted a role on the mParks Teach Committee as a representative of MACPRO. Mr. Abel commented that the addition of a focus group on campground operations is being proposed through mParks. Ms. Jutila thanked the commissioners for allowing her to attend the conference. She commented that the conference was beneficial toward her obtaining continuing education credits as a certified playground inspector.
- **Consumers Dam Sales Updates –** As I have received updates, I have been e-mailing them out to the Commission members.
- **Job Description Updates –** Were completed for all seasonal staff positions prior to interviews beginning. We have been posting ads on social media, work camper sites, and indeed.

- **Job Fairs –** Staff will be attending the Mecosta Osceola Career Center and Michigan Works Job Fairs in the next few weeks.
- **WPVRA Trash Cans –** We have ordered animal proof permanent trash containers for installation at the WPVRA Group Camp. This should be the last product order needed. We will then get concrete pads poured for the vault toilets and trash cans. Install the amenities and signage and finally contact EGLE for inspection. Once the campground is ready, we will come back to the Commission for discussion on fees, number of sites, etc. Mr. Griffith asked if we are in possession of the vault toilets. Mr. Abel commented that we have them and that our maintenance staff will be pouring the cement pads and affixing the toilets to them as soon as time permits. Everything at the WPVRA will be affixed to a concrete pad to discourage removal or destruction. A step will also be poured for the water pump for ease of access.
- **Merrill Gorrel Docks & Grounds –** Maintenance has restored skid pier launch docks that we plan to try to install at Merrill-Gorrel in place of the floating launch docks previously at those locations. We have purchased a few additional floats for the fishing platform in hopes we can float the front of the platform better. Merrill-Gorrel was hit hard by storms this winter and roving staff along with full-time maintenance have been out working to clear large tree debris from the roadways and camping areas. A previously approved contractor is replacing the flooring in the Merrill Pavilion.

b. <u>YTD Revenue Report</u>

We are running in line with 2025 figures and are currently trending toward reaching anticipated revenue goals.

c. <u>Save The Ponds – Organization Update</u>

Mr. Hatkowski announced that we have our permits from EGLE to begin phase one of the improvement plans. He thanked the Park Commissioners, donors, staff, volunteers and the County Commissioners for their support of this project. Mr. Hatkowski and Mr. Abel met with the planning engineer and walked the project to finalize the project's scope. They will be meeting with the engineer on the 20th to review the bid specifications and will be sending those out soon. We will give a three week window to receive bids from contractors or interested parties.

Mr. Hatkowski discussed a contingency that they found during their inspection with the engineer. Phase one involves repair of the south wall and raceway. When they were looking at the south wall, the engineer commented that during the installation of the steel on the south wall, it could cause a collapse of the north wall. The engineer is recommending steel on the south wall, north wall and pond 2 exit structure. Adding steel to the north wall is going to cost more, but it will shore up the entire raceway and prevent future collapse. This will add to the project cost. We will most likely need to go back to our donors with an additional funding request to cover these phases.

d. <u>MERS – Annual Statement</u>

Review and discussion. Mr. Abel commented that we are currently paying a reduced amount from last year. The required contribution was eliminated, and the voluntary contribution was reduced to $500 per month. There are currently five former staff remaining on this plan. Mr. Zimmerman asked if we are bound by the retirement plan with MERS. Discussion followed. Mr. Abel commented that we are aligned with the county retirement and medical plans. We will need to work with the county administrator if we choose to evaluate any other opportunities.

6. Committee Actions

a. Finance

i. 2026 Toilet Paper Supply Bids

Mr. Abel informed the commissioners of the three bids received. The lowest bidder was Xcel and was our toilet paper provider last season.
Mr. Vogel motioned, supported by Mr. Lambrix, to accept the bid from Xcel and award them the contract for the 2026 season. Motion carried unanimously.

ii. Old Wood Picnic Tables

Mr. Abel commented that there are 90 old wooden picnic tables at the administration building. The parks have been slowly replacing them with galvanized tables over the years, and these are the worst in condition from the parks/campgrounds. We were able to donate quite a few to other governmental agencies in the past. Mr. Abel asked if the Commission would consider the sale of these ageing tables for $20-25/table. Sale availability would be listed through our pages on Facebook. Mr. Griffith motioned, supported by Mrs. Bradstrom, to first offer the tables to all local townships via email, and then to sell them for $20-25 per table. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Personnel

i. 2026 Seasonal Staff Report

Ms. Jutila commented that we are working to fill positions with just 13 open positions left to fill. We had about 50% of last year's staff return. Ms. Jutila and Mrs. Goldammer are continuing with interviews, making offers and filling out paperwork for new staff.

ii. Park Managers – 24/7 residence during season

Mr. Abel commented that we currently require all park managers to reside in the parks with modern campgrounds 4-5 nights per week with the office managers, covering the remaining 2-3 nights per week. The state campground regulations do not require a manager to be present overnight. Mr. Abel asked the commissioners for their opinion and if we could allow managers to stay at their personal residence on call if they live within a short driving distance to their park. They would have a park cellphone and be able to be reached in case of emergency. Or, would the commissioners prefer that all managers continue to reside overnight on site? The commissioners discussed this and felt that the decision should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and left up to the Superintendent and Operations Director.

7. Financial

a. Financial Report – Rev & Expenses, Year-to-Year, Cash Spreadsheet

Reports were reviewed and discussed.

b. Approval of Bills

Mrs. Bradstrom motioned, supported by Mr. Vogel, to approve bills as listed and submitted in the amounts of $7,616.85, $3,0004.19, $26,357.32 and $11,727.90. Motion carried unanimously with a roll call vote.

8. **Public Comment* (general comments)**
   None

9. **Other Business:**
   Next Meeting is April 21st at the County Services Building in Big Rapids.

Adjourned at 5:51 PM