Mecosta County Park Commission
Commission Meeting

The May 19, 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 Vice-Chair Paul Griffith in the absence of Chairman Bill Stanek.

1. **Roll Call:**
   Members Present: Mr. Griffith, Mr. Hatkowski, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Lambrix, Mrs. Strong, Mr. Vogel, Mr. Zimmerman
   Members Absent: Mrs. Bradstrom, Mr. Stanek, Ms. Miller
   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**
   The agenda was revised to include additional items #5 related to a Consumer's Energy request for support and Item #7a., iii regarding a School Section playground plan review. Mr. Griffith asked the Commissioners to consider approval of the revised agenda. The agenda was approved as presented.

3. **Minutes of April 21st Park Commission Meeting**
   Mr. Hatkowski motion, supported by Mr. Johnson to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2026, Park Commission meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

4. **Public Comment** - No comments were received.

5. **Correspondence – Consumer's Energy Support Request**
   Patrick Tiedt of Consumer's Energy is asking for consideration of support on the sale of hydro dams. His correspondence to the Superintendent was, if the sale goes through then the hydro dams and reservoirs will remain, if the sale does not go through then Consumer's Energy will begin the process of decommissioning the facilities. Mr. Tiedt advised that they have received an abundance of negative comments from individuals and businesses regarding the sale, and they are hoping for support and more positive feedback from significant stakeholders. Individuals and entities can comment with letters of support. Additional discussion followed. The County Board of Commissioners has a review of the request scheduled for their first meeting in June. The Park Commission will take no action at this time, as evaluation of the circumstances by the County Commission and their feedback are an important factor.

6. **Reports and Updates**
   a. **Superintendent's Updates**

- **Davis Bridge Project –** Is still not fully closed out by the contractor. Items that remain include two areas of erosion control concerns, the re-painting of all of the lines for boat trailer parking to the correct angles, and installation of a berm around the vault toilet to resolve flooding issues with the vault. We installed the three educational signs this week along with the re-installation of the ADA Kayak/Canoe Launch. They will also be leveling out a low spot where water is pooling.
- **Davis Bridge Vandalism –** The vault toilet doors and windows screens were damaged by vandalism along with images being drawn all over the new fishing platform. We have installed multiple cell phone based trail cameras within the park to try to obtain footage if the perpetrators return.
- **School Section Project Bidding –** Is still a work in progress.
- **Merrill Gorrel Docks –** The seasonal campers have expressed concerns with our attempted resolution of skid pier docks on Merrill and Gorrel Lakes. We were able to make some modifications to the Merrill dock that we hope are deemed an improvement to last year's dock. We will continue to review comments and any further concerns received during the holiday weekend.

- **Brower Launch Docks –** ADA kayak/canoe launch and boat launch dock were reinstalled for the season at the shallow water channel.
- **Electric Outlets FGC –** The contractor has installed outlets on the remaining three cabins. This project is complete.
- **Paris Fishpond –** The fish were all moved back into the front, publicly available, fishpond after it received a deep cleaning.
- **Buckhorn Creek Project –** Detour route signage was installed with some equipment delivered this past week. Excavation was scheduled to begin on May 18th.
- **Staff Training –** Multiple sessions have been completed. The last regular training session for the year was Saturday the 16th. CPR/AED Trainings are scheduled over the next few weeks.
- **School Section Store –** Will be opening for the weekends starting May 15th and open 7-days a week starting Memorial Day weekend.
- **Parks Opening Days –** Brower Park opened very successfully on Friday the 24th. School Section & Merrill-Gorrel opened without issue for the season on May 1st. Paris Park opened with a new (temporary) office on May 8th.

b. Dragon Trail Committee Updates

i. FEMA Funding Request

There was a significant landslide within Section 7 of the trail. The trail builder has been able to review the damage at the site. He suggested that we reach out to trail designers and engineers to review repair options. He estimated the repair could be in the $1 million range. Due to an emergency declaration in Mecosta County related to the widespread flooding that caused the issues, we are able to request funding through FEMA. The Superintendent was able to secure three repair proposals, which will be submitted to FEMA with a funding request. We are waiting to hear back on next steps. The closure to this section could be 2 years or more.

ii. **Retail Sales Agreement**

The Superintendent met with the Parks Director for Newaygo County, and both recommended that each county make their own arrangements for retail products and sales of Dragon Trail merchandise. On our end, these items would be sold at the Brower Park Office and would be smaller items like T-shirts, water bottles, etc. We will start with a small order to evaluate how well the items sell.

c. YTD Revenue Report

The report was reviewed and discussed

d. Save The Ponds – Organization Update

i. Bid Evaluation

Mr. Hatkowski commented that bid documents were posted and advertised for phases 1, 2, and 3. We had six contractors attend the pre-bid meeting to look at the project. We received just one bid from Cliff Youngs. The bid for the repair of Pond 3 walls was higher than anticipated. The Save the Ponds committee recommended that the Park Commission request the full balance of funding necessary to complete the
3-phases from the currently available MET funding application process. The additional amount needed to complete the first 3 phases of construction is $250,000.

ii. Stone Raceway Repairs

The Save the Ponds committee asked that the Park Commission pay for repair of the decorative stonework on the raceway between Northland Drive and the White Pine Trail. The work would be to the south wall of stonework in this raceway section. The low bid on this portion of the project is $9,800 from Skinner Masonry & Concrete LLC. It was commented that by completing this portion of the project it will show progress and could inspire some donors to contribute.

Mr. Vogel motion, supported by Mr. Lambrix to approve funding up to $10,000 and to include the cost of any permits that may be needed to begin the work on the south wall. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Hatkowski motioned, supported by Mrs. Strong, to request MET funding in the amount of $250,000 to complete phase 1, 2, and 3 of the Save the Ponds project. Motion was approved unanimously with Mr. Lambrix abstaining.

The Superintendent will request MET funding from the County and include the bid specifications, timeline and any other pertinent documents.

7. Committee Actions

a. Finance

i. Fish Stocking School Section Lake

The School Section Lake Homeowners Association has reached out to the Superintendent with a request to help with fish stocking in the lake. The Superintendent commented that we have supported this in different ways over the years, including providing $750 for Walleye stocking and paying fifty percent of the cost for a fish survey in 2025. From the fish survey, the fisheries division of the Michigan DNR has asked to supplement the lake with bait fish. Jeff is recommending that the parks stock bait fish and that the homeowners association stock the walleye.

Mr. Vogel motion, supported by Mr. Johnson to approve the Superintendent's recommendation and have the parks support the fish stocking efforts at School Section Lake in the amount of $750. Motion passed.

ii. MET Funding Requests

Discussed previously on the agenda under Section 6, d ii. No additional projects were recommended for MET application submission.

iii. School Section Playground Plan Review

We have been receiving proposals for the playground over the last seven months. We were waiting to get bids back on the building project before we proceeded on the playground. With deadlines approaching for grant funding, we would like to move forward with the playground portion of the project. We will continue to seek bids on the rest of the project which includes a new beach bathhouse, pavilion, sidewalks and ADA access to the beach and playground. We will also be more ADA compliant with the sidewalks and access to the buildings. We have two proposals to present from Sinclair, who is the only company that is preapproved by the DNR Trust Fund which allows for approval without further public bidding.

The total anticipated budget for this project is $900,000. We previously received $250,000 from the County BOC for the renovations to the beach bathhouse and pavilion, $180,000 from the county for playground renovations, and $400,000 from a DNR Trust Fund grant. We have allocated $70,000 in the Park Commission budget to complete the $900,000 total. We received an additional grant for playground components through a Statewide Initiative Grant covering $91,000 of playground components. The Statewide Initiative Grant funding must be spent before year end 2026.

The Superintendent and Operations Director have been working with Sinclair and tweaking the proposals to ensure that all needs are met and that we get the most appropriate playground equipment. The two bids in the packet are the two best options we were able to finalize through any of the providers we had worked with.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Lambrix motioned, supported by Mr. Johnson to approve the bid of $290,073.04 from Sinclair and to begin the playground renovation portion of this project. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Rules and Regulations

i. Seasonal Camper Resident Preference

Mr. Zimmerman commented that he was approached by a Mecosta County resident. The resident asked why county residents aren't given any preference when applying for a seasonal campsite in the county parks. The Superintendent reviewed the lottery processes and explained how they are administered for each park. Mr. Zimmerman advised he would let the resident know how the process works.

c. Buildings and Grounds

i. Paris Park Office Fire Updates

The building was a total loss. It has been removed and a new temporary office was purchased with approval from the insurance company. We purchased the temporary building from Between the Lines Storage Solutions of Stanwood with very similar specifications to the structure that had burned.

Per the insurance company, we have 24 months to rebuild a new permanent office with $46,000 of that cost being covered by insurance. The Superintendent will be sending the insurance company a list of contents and requesting a check for replacement of those supplemental items.

The Superintendent asked the Commissioners about designing a new office and then using that as a template for potentially replacing all the park offices in the future. Discussion followed.

The Commissioners asked the Superintendent to create an RFP for an architect to work on a new office design. If we pay for the design and blueprint, then it is ours to use for future projects. The new office building will meet all ADA requirements and have enough room for customers, staff, and retail space.

8. Financial

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

Reports were reviewed and discussed

b. Approval of Bills

Mr. Lambrix motioned, supported by Mr. Johnson, to approve the bills listed and submitted in the amounts of $8,061.73, $11,709.52, $42,077.32 and $29,540.23.

9. Public Comment - No comments were received.

10. Other Business:

a. Next Meeting is June 16th at the County Services Building in Big Rapids.

11. Adjournment at 7:05 p.m.