

Mecosta County Park Commission Commission Meeting

The May 19, 2020 Commission Meeting of the Mecosta County Park Commission was called to order via live video conference at 5:00 PM by the Commission Chairman, Mr. Stratton.

Roll Call

Members Present: Mr. Johnson, Ms. Miller, Mr. O’Neil, Mr. Perialas, Mr. Stanek, Mr. Stratton and Mr. Vogel. **Members Absent:** Mrs. Bradstrom, Mr. Roels and Mr. Sweir. **Others Present:** Jeff Abel - Superintendent, Erin Bean - Operations Manager and Kathy Maclean - Administrative Clerk.

The Chairman addressed the public that was present and provided comment instructions.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Vogel motioned, seconded by Mr. Stanek to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Vogel motioned, seconded by Mr. Stanek to approve the minutes of the April 21st Commission Meeting. Motion carried.

Public Comment

Mrs. Shoemaker inquired what the legal issues were that prevented the parks to open to the seasonal campers. The Chairman addressed the question. Under the Governor’s current Executive Order (EO) and the following FAQs it is clear that we are not permitted to open to all of our seasonal campers, and we will be in violation of the EO and subsequently be jeopardizing our campground licenses. Additionally, legal opinion was sought, and multiple sources concurred that we are not permitted to provide “recreational camping”.

Reports and Updates

Superintendent’s Updates

The Superintendent updated the Commission on 19 current and completed projects, including:

Goose Nests located at Brower Park; 16 eggs destroyed. We have been officially notified that goose round-up will not occur this year due to COVID.

DNR Fisheries Though the DNR are not providing us with fish to raise this year, they did reach out to us to complete a Muskegon River stocking from Paris Park; 20,000 Rainbow Trout and 9,500 Brown Trout.

Merrill-Gorrel Electric project is 99% completed with Consumers Energy making the final connection.

Haymarsh has been opened for Day Use with local Conservation Officers agreeing to be the primary deterrent to prevent visitors from camping; vault toilets have been closed as we are unable to adhere to current cleaning standards.

Davis Bridge is open with vault toilets available.

Brower Park Launch is open with vault toilets, currently, in use.

Disk Golf Course Pizza Vibez is interest in making a donation toward a disk golf course being installed at School Section Lake Park.

Tree Planting has been scheduled for next Wednesday at Paris and School Section Lake Parks. The 40 ornamental trees were obtained through a MRWA Grant.

Dragon Trail Updates - Trail markers have been received and their installation begun. A commitment from WMMBA for \$36,000 toward Task Order 2 has been received. Multiple online meetings have occurred with the newly hired fundraiser. One of the first big asks will be to Nestle Waters.

Incident /Accident Report - None.

Correspondence - None.

Committee Actions

Masterplan

Facility Statuses and Closures The Davis Bridge Boat Launch is open, Haymarsh is available, the White Pine Valley Recreation Area is available.

Opening of Operations Camping is still not permitted. Discussion and suggestions have revolved around what opportunities can be provided for the upcoming Memorial Day weekend to the Holiday traffic we may see. The removal of the Brower Park barriers is suggested and the permitting of day use of the beach, launches, grounds and the marina bathhouse with the exception of showers. Mr. Vogel motioned, seconded by Mr. Stanek to permit Brower seasonal campers to bring in their decks, sheds and permit overnight boat mooring with the purchase of seasonal boat permits, no camping units are permitted to enter the park. Motion carried. Mr. Stanek motioned, seconded by Mr. Vogel to open School Section Lake Park to day use of the beach, grounds, camp store (no concessions) and launch only and to barricade the roadways to the camping area. Motion carried. Additional day use opportunities to be available at Paris Park by permitting access to the back ponds and Eiffel Tower areas. Merrill-Gorrel to continue to permit guests to park at the gate and walk in.

School Section Lake Memorial Project Updates Concrete construction and electric to start next week.

Personnel

Staff Update 38 of 45 positions have been filled with 3 employees to complete their physicals and drug test in the next few days. 4 of the 7 positions to be filled are at Brower. 2 training sessions are scheduled Thursday and Friday for 18 staff.

Manager Trailers There are some tax concerns if we rent the trailers year-round to seasonal park management staff. The trailers may need to be added to the tax rolls, in affect losing our tax-exempt property status and the staff may, also, have payroll tax implications. More information is being sought and consideration being given to possible host camper agreements.

Finance

Millage Proposal Update The County Board of Commissioners has approved the request to remove the Park's Millage from the August election cycle this year and re-evaluate when the financial environment is more stable.

Seasonal Camper Payment Plan The objective was to develop a payment plan that would ease campers' financial hardship, but as our opening day has continued to change, we have now moved past the dates of when we had determined payments would be due.

Financial

Financial Report - Revenue & Expenses, Cash Spreadsheet, Year-to-Year - Reviewed and discussed the standard financial reports and additionally reviewed the revenue interval report that was presented. As of March 11th, the Parks' revenue was ahead of 2019 by nearly \$69,000, thru May 5th and April 16th the revenue ahead of last year continued to decline and as of May 13th the Parks' revenue shows behind last year by more than \$17,000. This number is extremely skewed as it does not, yet, include loss of Seasonal Camping and Memorial Weekend revenue.

Approval of Bills - Mr. Stanek motioned, seconded by Mr. Perialas to approve the bills in the amounts of \$23,094.08 and \$8,932.32. Motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.

Public Comment: Ms. Foss asked if Brower Seasonal Campers would be permitted to park their boat trailers and trucks on their seasonal campsites. Yes, as determined earlier in this meeting. Ms. Foss, additionally, commented that the news reported that Ottawa County was permitting Seasonal Campers. The Superintendent stated he would reach out to their Park's Director.

Other Business:

Next Meeting is 5:00 PM, June 16th at the County Services Bldg. on Northland Dr., Big Rapids.

Meet & Greet Proposed Dates

School Section - 7 PM, Friday, July 24th

Merrill-Gorrel - 7 PM, Friday, July 31st

Brower - 9 AM, Saturday, July 25th

Paris - 9 AM, Saturday, August 1st

Adjournment: 6:15 PM