



CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

June 22, 2023

4:30 PM

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – *Chair Jones*
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – *Commissioner*
3. **ROLL CALL** - *Clerk/Register Monica McMichael*
4. **PUBLIC COMMENT** (limit 3 minutes/person)
5. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA** – *Commissioner*
6. **RECOGNITIONS**
7. **PRESENTATIONS**
8. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**
9. **NEW BUSINESS**
 - A. **R-89-23** – Resolution of Support of Spark Grant Application for Lawless Nature Center & Observatory
10. **ADJOURNMENT**



CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: Matthew Newton, County Administrator

DATE: June 22, 2023

RE: Spark Grant for Lawless Nature Center/Observatory

REQUEST:

Approve Resolution in Support of Spark Grant Application for Lawless Nature Center/Observatory.

BACKGROUND:

The Cass County Parks Department is applying for a grant for Round 2 of the Spark Grant. The grant, if awarded, would provide for the construction of a nature center and star gazing observatory along with restroom access improvements. The installation of both structures would encourage growth and revenue potential through year-round use of those facilities. They are also major component within the strategic plan for Lawless Park and would support future projects including camping facilities.

The maximum amount that may be requested through the Spark Grant program is \$1,000,000 with no matching requirement. However, the Charles Bombardie Trust donation of \$202,000 was specifically intended for the development of a nature center and provides an opportunity to realize that goal in addition to providing a match that may increase the likelihood of the project being selected. Of note, that funding would be the only matching dollars provided.

The Cass County Parks Commission has also sponsored a resolution of support and that is attached for your review. Parks Director Wyman will be available for any questions that anyone may have regarding the project or the grant application. A memo from Director Wyman is also attached showing a breakdown of the project costs.

REVIEWS:

Prior to submitting this request, this agenda item was reviewed by all impacted departments noted below: (Ex: Administration, Maintenance, HR, and IT)

Parks, Administration

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS:

The Spark Grant has no matching requirements; however, the proposal here would utilize the donation from the Charles Bombardie Trust of \$202,000.00 in support of the Nature Center component of the application.

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt R-89-23 Resolution in Support of Spark Grant Application for Lawless Nature Center & Observatory as presented.

CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

R-89-23

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF SPARK GRANT APPLICATION FOR DR. LAWLESS INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY PARK NATURE CENTER / OBSERVATORY DEVELOPMENT

WHEREAS, the Cass County Board of Commissioners and the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission support the purpose of Spark Grant funding to create and redevelop public outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors, especially those who were hardest hit, economically, by the Covid-19 pandemic;

WHEREAS, the Cass County Board of Commissioners and the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission are dedicated to the improvement of parks, tourism, and recreation facilities in Cass County;

WHEREAS, Dr. Lawless International Dark Sky Park has shown great potential for recreation development in Cass County throughout its existence;

WHEREAS, recent dark sky designation has reinforced the mission of leading by example as stewards of the land, water and sky;

WHEREAS, dark sky designation along with the development of a proposed nature center and star gazing observatory along with restroom access improvements, will encourage growth and revenue potential through year-round use from diverse user groups within Cass County and beyond; and

WHEREAS, if the grant is awarded, the Cass County Board of Commissioners hereby commits a local match of \$202,000, donated by the Charles Bombardie Trust specifically for nature center development within Dr. Lawless International Dark Sky Park.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Cass County Board of Commissioners, in a cooperative effort with the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission, pledge their support in the funding effort for the Dr. Lawless International Dark Sky Park Nature Center / Observatory Development Project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Cass County Board of Commissioners hereby authorizes submission of a Spark Grant Application to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for \$998,000, and further resolves to make available a local match through financial commitment of \$202,000 (20%) of the total \$1,200,000 project cost during the 2024-2025 fiscal year or when grant funding becomes available.

ADOPTED THIS 22nd DAY OF JUNE 2023

ATTEST:

Monica McMichael, Clerk/Register
COUNTY OF CASS

Jeremiah Jones, Chair
CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**DR. LAWLESS INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY PARK
NATURE CENTER / OBSERVATORY DEVELOPMENT
RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission supports the purpose of Spark Grant funding to create and redevelop public outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors, especially those hardest hit economically by the Covid-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission is dedicated to the improvement of parks, tourism and recreation opportunities in Cass County; and

WHEREAS, recent dark sky designation at Dr. Lawless County Park has reinforced the mission of leading by example as stewards of the land, water and sky; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Lawless International Dark Sky Park has shown great potential for recreation development to be enjoyed by all segments our society throughout its existence; and

WHEREAS, dark sky designation along with the development of a proposed nature center, star gazing observatory along with restroom access improvements, will encourage growth and revenue potential through year around use from diverse user groups within Cass County and beyond; and

WHEREAS, if the grant is awarded, the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission recommends the Cass County Board of Commissioners hereby commit a local match of \$202,000, donated by the Charles Bombardie Trust specifically for nature center development within Dr. Lawless International Dark Sky Park; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission pledge their support for the Dr. Lawless International Dark Sky Park Nature Center / Observatory Development Project, and


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission recommends that the Cass County Board of Commissioners support and herby authorize submission of a Spark Grant Application to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for \$998,000, and to make available a local match through a financial commitment of \$202,000 (16.8%) of the total \$1,200,000 project cost during the 2024-2025 fiscal year or when grant funding becomes available.

ADOPTED THIS 8th DAY OF JUNE 2023

ATTEST:



Patty Dohm, Recording Secretary
Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission



Fritz Kucklick, President
Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission