

**CASS COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room – County Building  
Cassopolis, MI, MI 49031  
September 9, 2021**

**9:00 a.m. – CALL MEETING TO ORDER** –President Kucklick

**INVOCATION** – Commissioner L.. Parrish

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – Commissioner L. Parrish

**ROLL CALL** – Recording Secretary Dohm

Director Wyman – P

Thomas Atkinson – p

Annie File - P

Bruce Campbell - A

Hailey Harman - P

David Kring – P

Fritz Kucklick – P

Lyndon Parrish - P

Robert Parrish - P

Jamie Stafne - P

Jeff VanBelle - A

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Motion:** Commissioner Kring

**Second:** Commissioner File

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES –**

**Motion:** Commissioner Kring

**Second:** Commissioner File

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS –**

Paul Fallon, Birch Lake Association

Blair Garzo, Birch Lake Association

Matt Newton, Deputy County Administrator

**PUBLIC COMMENT –**

1. Paul Fallon
  - a. Was attending the meeting to see what progress was being made on the boat launch at Birch Lake.
  - b. Director Wyman explained the procedures that were done to temporarily get through the rest of the season. He is looking to make more improvements by next spring.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS – None**

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Director Wyman**

1. Was presented, with no questions or comments.

**BUDGET – Director Wyman**

1. Was presented.
  - a. Since this is the last month in the county's fiscal year, Director Wyman is moving some things into different line items.
  - b. Commissioner File stated that she believed Volinia Township was applying for one of the grants, and possibly parks could partner with them for some improvements at Russ Forest.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. Dark Sky
  - a. Dark Sky report was given by Commissioner R. Parrish.
  - b. Yearly report was sent to IDA.
  - c. Quarterly newsletter was completed and sent out.
  - d. Dr. Dave Seaman from North Carolina has offered to put us in contact with the Chair of the Physics Department at Notre Dame as they have expressed interest in helping us construct an observatory at Lawless.
    - i. They will need construction estimates including telescope and mount.

- ii. Commissioner R. Parrish suggested setting up a committee – no action taken on this.
  - e. Commissioner R. Parrish put together a calendar of his photos from the skies at Lawless during Dark Skies. He suggested making some to sell – no action taken on this.
  - f. He has purchased a mini Astro-computer that should allow him to share views from his telescope to a viewing monitor.
  - g. The person making the professional video of our dark skies is still working on it, and it will be available for us to use.
- 2. Russ lease
  - a. Biggest change to the lease is that it went from 30 years to a five year lease.
    - i. It was explained to Director Wyman that the department handling leases could administer a 5 year lease without going in front of a full board.
    - ii. If needed to acquire documentation that shows control over Russ Park remains with the county for DNR grant, MSU is willing to work at us to provide that.
  - b. MSU will not put the Newton House and Russ Park on the same lease.
- 3. Lawless Master Plan
  - a. Director Wyman provided the latest drawings. The next step is getting the latest cost estimates, bringing those back to the park's board and then to the BOC.
- 4. Special Events
  - a. Southern Straight Singers at Lawless Park tomorrow night at 8:00 p.m. prior to Dark Sky.
  - b. Harvest Festival at the Newton House – October 3<sup>rd</sup>.
  - c. Harvest Fest/Trunk or Treat – October 16
  - d. Sandhill Crane – October 24
    - i. Received a \$7,000 grant from St. Deny's through Ron Gunn for the Sandhill Crane.
- 5. Dowagiac River Clean Up
  - a. The area received a \$4,050 grant from Gateway to hire a professional group to clean out the river. They should be on the river next week.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

- 1. M-60/M-40 Signage
  - a. Director Wyman has been in contact with MDOT and there will be Dark Sky signs put up.
    - i. There will be a cost, but that is not known at this time.
- 2. Russ Forest Volunteers
  - a. Director Wyman expressed his gratitude to the Road Commission for delivering gravel to Russ Forest and to the volunteers that spread it on the trails. He said the trails are in the best shape they have been in several years.
- 3. The Friends of the Cass County Parks/Grant
  - a. Received an anonymous grant of \$5,000 to be used at Russ Forest from a generous benefactor that loves to walk at the park.

#### **BOARD MEMBER COMMENT/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Commissioner Kring – thanked Commissioner Stafne for contacting the trustee of Newberg encouraging them to apply for the available recovery money.
- Commissioner Stafne stated that she had hoped Administrator Carmen would have been present at the meeting as she wished clarification on his statement at the last meeting regarding the need for the board to meet in the conference room/and or approval be given to the board for the liberty or freedom of continuing to meet at the different parks. She expressed the importance of the board members to be in the parks and view their conditions.
- Commissioner Stafne reminded the board of the Melting Man 8<sup>th</sup> annual event. At this time they have 800 registrants.
- Commissioner Kring gave his kudos to the Birch Lake Association on their well-executed tree removal process.

#### **Adjournment:**

**Motion:** Commissioner Kring

**Second:** Commissioner File

Respectfully submitted,  
Patty Dohm  
Recording Secretary

**Next regular meeting October 14, 2021**