



Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission

MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: January 12, 2021
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Location: Zoom Digital Meeting

Members Present: Robert Marans, WCPARC President (attending from Ann Arbor Township, MI); Patricia Tupacz Scribner, WCPARC Vice President (attending from Pittsfield Township, MI); Janis Bobrin (attending from Glen Arbor Township, MI), Daniel Ezekiel (attending from Ann Arbor City, MI), Ricky Jefferson (attending from Ypsilanti Township, MI), Robert Joerg (attending from Ann Arbor City, MI), Jo Ann McCollum (attending from Ypsilanti Township, MI), Brenda McKinney (attending from Superior Township, MI), Jason Morgan (attending from Ann Arbor City, MI), and Evan Pratt (attending from Scio Township, MI)

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Coy Vaughn, Director; Meghan Bonfiglio, Deputy Director; Ginny Trocchio, Superintendent of Park Planning and Natural Areas; Jason Brooks, Manager of Finance and Administration; Rosie Pahl-Donaldson, Park Planner; Peter Sanderson, Park Planner; Hannah Cooley, Management Analyst

Others Present: None

1. Call to Order/Moment of Silence

Mr. Marans called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. with a moment of silence in appreciation of first responders.

2. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December 8, 2020 regular meeting were included with the agenda material.

Mr. Ezekiel mentioned that on page four, staff should change, “Ms. Ezekiel” to “Mr. Ezekiel.”

It was moved by Ms. McKinney and seconded by Mr. Pratt to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2020 meeting, as amended. Ayes all, the motion was approved.

3. Public Comment

Paul Berry, stated that he wanted to see Dominican Meadows become more accessible to the public and asked how to go about making the request. Mr. Marans recommended he reach out to staff. Mr. Berry stated that he would email Mr. Vaughn, who agreed to follow up.

Diane O'Connell, Ann Arbor Township Supervisor, stated that she supports the Stiles-Kaldijan item on the agenda and would like to see the property become part of the Ann Arbor Township portfolio. She added that the county's share would be 16% of the purchase price.

Eric Kaldijan stated that he appreciates the county's commitment to preservation and he looks forward to continued work with the county. He added that the Stiles-Kaldijan property has some valuable aspects.

4. Communications, Projects & Activities

Mr. Vaughn reported on the December communications which were included in the packet.

It was moved by Ms. Bobrin and seconded by Mr. Pratt to accept and file the Communications for the month of December 2020, as submitted. Roll call vote: 10 Ayes, 0 Nays, the motion was approved.

It was moved by Mr. Pratt and seconded by Mr. Ezekiel to accept and file the Projects and Activities update for the month of December 2020, as submitted. Roll call vote: 10 Ayes, 0 Nays, the motion was approved.

5. Consent Agenda

None.

6. Financial & Recreation Reports – December 2020

A. Financial Reports

Mr. Brooks reported and stated that the total for the claims for the month of December was \$1,202,254.84.

It was moved by Mr. Pratt and seconded by Ms. McKiney to accept and file the Financial Reports for the months of December 2020 as submitted. Roll call vote: 10 Ayes, 0 Nays, the motion was approved.

B. Recreation Reports

Mr. Brooks reported on recreation reports for the month of December 2020. He also provided a summary of the natural areas special revenue fund and December budget and transfer adjustments.

It was moved by Ms. Bobrin and seconded by Ms. Tupacz Scribner to accept and file the Recreation Reports for the month of December 2020 as submitted. Roll call vote: 10 Ayes, 0 Nays, the motion was approved.

7. Old Business

A. NAPP – Buesser Partnership

Ms. Trocchio stated that this NAPP partnership was originally approved in 2019 but was being brought back to the Commission due to a landowner request to amend the size of the building envelope from 2 acres to 4 acres. She also stated that she would like to receive direction from the Commission as to how these changes are handled in the future. Ms. Bobrin stated that she understands the rationale for requesting the building envelope expansion but added she does not recall the initial discussion because it occurred a while back. Ms. Trocchio stated that it is somewhat important for the owners to be able to live where they farm and that they intended use building envelope for a residential building and farm buildings, if needed. She added that it was allowed in the original approval because it was along the road and was consistent with the previous discussions with the Commission.

Ms. Bobrin stated that the Buesser property situation is a pragmatic one given that the parcel is rendered unusable if they cannot put in a septic field.

Mr. Pratt seconded by Ms. Bobrin moved to offer a friendly amendment to the original motion to authorize staff to work with the property owner to define exactly how much land is needed for the septic field, not to exceed four acres, and request staff return to the Commission with an update. No objections were raised to the friendly amendment.

It was moved by Mr. Pratt and seconded by Ms. Bobrin to authorize staff to work with the property owner to define exactly how much land is needed for the septic field, request staff return to the Commission with an update, to continue to partner with the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt program and Legacy Land Conservancy on the purchase of the conservation easement on the Buesser property and to allow a building envelope of up to 4-acres to be incorporated into the conservation easement. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McCollum), the motion was approved.

B. NAPP –Stiles-Kaldijan 2 Partnership

Ms. Pahl Donaldson reported that the lack of an envelope at the outset was lapse in communication and not brought to WCPARC initially, but she added that an envelope was the intention at the outset. She stated that there is a preference for a building envelope when it comes to agricultural properties because it allows for a steward to live on the property. Ms. Pahl Donaldson stated that the score does not change overall. She added that she would have had no problem recommending this item if it had come to us this way previously.

Ms. Tupacz Scribner stated that she is not comfortable with building envelopes coming to the WCPARC after initial approval. Mr. Ezekiel stated that it seems that we are looking at smaller and smaller properties with more building exclusions and the worry was that we were using public funds to protect estates. Ms. Bobrin stated that she feels it is a bit of a stretch that a farmer has to live on the property to farm. She added that she is starting to get concerned that we are using public funds for private benefit. She added that it may be necessary to firm this issue up with drafting a policy and to work with staff and other partners to develop a consistent approach. Mr. Ezekiel asked how everyone would feel about setting up a working session with the Greenbelt to get their thoughts on building exclusions on protected properties. Ms. Bobrin stated that bringing in other partners is a longer-term approach but that the decision on these items is needed soon. Mr. Joerg asked if similar projects were going to be coming up in the next couple of months. Ms. Pahl Donaldson stated that there is one coming up with a complex structure in the next couple of months but nothing like this one. Mr. Morgan asked if this project complies with policy on whether it can be supported. Ms. Trocchio stated that we typically like any envelope to be along the road rather than in the middle or back of the property. Mr. Pratt stated that it was helpful to hear that there was always an intent to include an envelope with Stiles-Kaldijan. He added that it has been upwards of a couple of years since we talked about our criteria. Mr. Pratt stated that he would not be uncomfortable moving forward right now but that it sounds like some people would like a little more time. Mr. Marans stated that it makes sense that there would be a cutout for some sort of building in agricultural easements but that he is concerned about people getting public money to acquire a large part of their property without anyone having access to that parcel.

Mr. Ezekiel stated that he would like to suggest having a working group on building envelopes with some members of WCPARC and some members of staff as well as outside groups if they are interested.

It was moved by Mr. Pratt and seconded by Ms. Bobrin to continue to partner with Ann Arbor Township for the purchase of a conservation easement on the Stiles-Kaldjian 2 property in Ann Arbor Township and approve the 2-acre building envelope that will be included with the conservation easement. Roll call vote: 5 Ayes, 4 Nays (Marans, McKinney, Morgan, and Tupacz Scribner), 1 Absent (McCollum), the motion was approved.

C. Other New Business

None

8. New Business

A. Election of Officers

It was moved by Mr. Pratt and seconded by Ms. McKinney to nominate Patricia Tupacz Scribner to serve as President of the Commission, Janis Bobrin to serve as Vice President of the Commission and Daniel Ezekiel to serve as Secretary of the Commission. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McCollum), the motion was approved.

B. Trail Clearing Award

Mr. Sanderson reported that there are several upcoming projects for the Border-to-Border Trail. He stated that in order to comply with environmental regulations that it is recommended that any tree clearing work be conducted between October and March. Mr. Sanderson stated that staff is recommending doing this work out of a general contract and has released RFP 8015 which received three bids. He reported that the railroad corridor requires different insurance which is why the bid was split up. Mr. Sanderson stated that the project around the Dyer property was added after the bid and after Dyer was closed.

Mr. Joerg asked if the other two companies commented on why they did not bid on the second phase of the contract. Mr. Sanderson stated that he believed it was because they are smaller companies that could not meet the insurance requirements. Mr. Joerg stated that he does not love the fact that we would go with a contractor that is based out of metro Cleveland when we have a smaller company based in Washtenaw County that has bid. He asked if there was any way to work with the Chelsea based firm. Mr. Sanderson stated that Davey was able to provide lower pricing than he has ever seen on tree clearing services. Mr. Vaughn stated that he agrees with Mr. Joerg and that WCPARC tries to be sensitive to local vendor concerns. He added that when the bids are close that staff tries to seek additional justification but that in this case the bids were not close.

Ms. McKinney stated that she agrees with Mr. Joerg. She added that Davey does do a lot of work in the area. Mr. Sanderson stated that Davey is already a pre-qualified railroad contractor to do this type of work.

It was moved by Ms. McKinney and seconded by Ms. Tupacz Scribner to award RFP 8015 to Davey Tree Experts for the amount of \$188,016.20 and authorize an additional ten percent (10%) contingency of \$19,000. Roll call vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McCollum), 1 Abstention (Joerg), the motion was approved.

C. Renaming Request – Scio Woods Preserve

Mr. Vaughn presented a renaming request for Scio Woods Preserve. He stated that Lew Kidder has gone above and beyond working on the B2B trail and was a key figure in establishing the road and trails millage. He added that should this item be approved that Scio Woods Preserve would be called the Kidder-McKeachie Scio Woods Preserve

It was moved by Mr. Ezekiel and seconded by Ms. Bobrin to approve the proposed remaining of the Scio Woods Preserve to now be Kidder-McKeachie Scio Woods Preserve to honor the Kidder-McKeachie family based on significant financial contributions and their outstanding civic contributions to WCPARC and the residents of Washtenaw County. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McCollum), was approved.

D. NAPP – Lippert Sales Contract

Ms. Trocchio reported that the Lippert Property is adjacent to Whitmore Lake Preserve, which was purchased from a number of different landowners. At the time of the original purchase, the one parcel owned by the Lippert family was not purchased. The family re-nominated the property in 2020 and it contains additional shoreline to Lawton Lake and will provide an opportunity for trail expansion on the property. Ms. Trocchio also commented that the property scores on the higher end of NAPP scoring criteria.

It was moved by Ms. Tupacz Scribner and seconded by Mr. Pratt to authorize a sales contract for the Lippert property in the amount of \$297,000, contingent upon completion of all necessary due diligence investigation and final approval of the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McCollum), the motion was approved.

E. B2B – Green Lake Statue Proposal

Mr. Sanderson reported that HWPI would like to install a bronze statue along the Border to Border Trail on the eastern shore of Green Lake within the Waterloo Recreation Area. He added that the statue is of an indigenous woman that is based on clothing dating to the pre-20th century. He added that a small plaza constructed from natural materials and that it would be accessible. Mr. Sanderson stated that long-term maintenance and stewardship would be the responsibility of the Commission.

9. Commissioners/Directors Comments

Mr. Jefferson stated that Ms. McCollum had a problem getting back onto the meeting and that we may have a bandwidth problem.

Mr. Vaughn thanked Mr. Marans for his years serving as president of the Commission.

10. Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Pratt and seconded by Mr. Jefferson to adjourn the meeting. Ayes all; the motion was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.