



## **Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission**

### MINUTES OF MEETING

**Date:** February 8, 2022

**Time:** 2:00 p.m.

**Location:** Washtenaw County Learning Resource Center, 4135 Washtenaw Ave., Ann Arbor, MI

**Members Present:** Janis Bobrin, WCPARC Vice President; Dan Ezekiel, Secretary; Robert Joerg; Robert Marans; Sue Shink, and Jo Ann McCollum

**Members Absent:** Patricia Scribner, Brenda McKinney, Ricky Jefferson, and Evan Pratt

**Staff Present:** Coy Vaughn, Director; Meghan Bonfiglio, Deputy Director; Ginny Leikam, Superintendent of Park Planning and Natural Areas; Jason Brooks, Manager of Finance and Administration (attending remotely); Ann Ziolkowski, Communications Manager; Jeff Dehring, Park Planner; Hannah Cooley, Management Analyst

#### **1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance**

Ms. Bobrin called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **2. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the January 11, 2022 regular meeting were included with the agenda material.

*It was moved by Mr. Joerg and seconded by Mr. Marans to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2022, regular meeting. Roll call vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 4 Absent (Scribner, McKinney, Jefferson, Pratt), the motion was approved.*

#### **3. Public Comment**

Toni Spears spoke regarding the possibility of routing a portion of the B2B Trail through the Miller-Smith Woods Preserve. She stated that she was an avid cyclist, a park volunteer, and a supporter of the B2B Trail. However, she is not in favor of the alternative trail alignment in the NAPP Preserve because it would be disruptive and would forever change the character of the preserve. She was also concerned with setting a precedent that would allow future hard surface trails and bicycles in our nature preserves.

Jeff Sweeney, resident of Superior Township, noted that he had spoken at the January Commission meeting regarding some concerns at the Swift Run Dog Park. He thanked Coy Vaughn, Jeff Dehring, and Thomas Power for meeting with him at the site to understand his concerns help plan a list of action steps to address the issues.

#### **4. Communications, Projects & Activities**

Mr. Vaughn reported on the January communications which were included in the packet and provided a presentation summarizing the projects, programs, and events for the month. Ms. Bonfiglio and Ms. Cooley presented various software upgrades that will help enhance our park operations.

Mr. Joerg asked if patrons at the golf course would still be able to call in and make tee times with the new software upgrades. Ms. Bonfiglio responded that phone and in-person tee times will still be available.

Ms. McCollum asked if we considered a software that would allow residents to call in and report maintenance issues. Ms. Bonfiglio responded that we researched various workflow management software systems and there are some that integrate public reporting, such as SeeClickFix that is used by the City of Ann Arbor. At this time, staff felt it was cost prohibitive but will continue to evaluate and look for ways to implement a public-facing reporting tool in the future.

***It was moved by Mr. Ezekiel and seconded by Ms. Shink to accept and file the Communications, Projects & Activities for the month of January 2022, as submitted. Roll call vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 4 Absent (Scribner, McKinney, Jefferson, Pratt), the motion was approved.***

#### **5. Financial & Recreation Reports – January 2022**

##### **A. Financial Reports**

Mr. Brooks reported on the financials and stated that the total for the claims for the month of January was \$1,244,217.99.

***It was moved by Mr. Ezekiel and seconded by Ms. McCollum to accept and file the Financial Reports for the month of January 2022 as submitted. Roll call vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 4 Absent (Scribner, McKinney, Jefferson, Pratt), the motion was approved.***

##### **B. Recreation Reports**

Mr. Brooks presented the recreation reports for the month of January 2022 for all park facilities.

***It was moved by Mr. Marans and seconded by Ms. Shink to accept and file the Recreation Reports for the month of January 2022 as submitted. Roll call vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 4 Absent (Scribner, McKinney, Jefferson, Pratt), the motion was approved.***

#### **6. Old Business**

##### **A. 2022-25 B2B Budget**

Mr. Vaughn reported on the collaboration between the Commission and the Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative (HWPI) and how it was formalized with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2017. At the time of the MOU the Commission allocated \$4 million of general parks funding to the B2B Trail through 2022—effectively matching the \$1 million of funds that come from the Road and Trails Millage each year.

Since 2017, the Commission, HWPI and other project partners have collaborated to build, rebuild, and initiate 16 construction projects totaling 14.1 miles at a cost of nearly \$20M. The Commission's portion was approximately 1/3 of the total (\$6.5M), another 1/3 has come from HWPI, and the remainder from grants and other public partners. In 2021, the Commission established the B2B Trail Special Revenue Fund and deposited \$820,000 to secure long-term maintenance funding based on previous and anticipated future commitments and obligations.

Mr. Vaughn explained that the Commission and its partners have made significant progress on the B2B Trail since 2017 but there is more work to be done to complete the initiative. Staff anticipates that there are another 30 projects required (including engineering, planning, and construction) to finish the remaining 18 miles of trail. Staff is working to chart a course towards completion of the B2B Trail initiative, while maintaining the Commission's allocation as 1/3 of the total cost. HWPI has a proven track record raising private funds for the project and anticipates continued success at providing approximately 1/3 of the cost of the trail.

Due to rising taxable value in the county, the Commission's portion of the Road and Trails Millage is anticipated to be approximately \$1.2M per year for the B2B Trail (\$4.8M over four years), less the \$600,000 from the Connecting Communities Grant Program. Based on anticipated future expenditures for the B2B Trail and due to continuously rising construction costs, staff requests that the Commission reauthorize its four-year parks general fund commitment to the B2B Trail and increase the amount to match the funds from the Road and Trails Millage (\$1.2M/year; \$4.8M through 2025).

Mr. Marans asked if the Commission could get a more detailed presentation of all the remaining segments of the B2B. Mr. Vaughn responded yes and explained that each segment would be presented in detail at the time that Commission action is taken to award a construction contract.

Mr. Joerg asked if it was anticipated that all remaining segments of the B2B would be complete by 2025. Mr. Vaughn responded that it was doubtful that all construction would be complete, however, he anticipates that engineering would be underway for any segment that was not complete by 2025 in preparation for bidding the construction soon after.

***It was moved by Ms. McKinney and seconded by Ms. Bobrin that the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission authorize a commitment of \$4.8 million from the parks fund over four years (2022-2025) to augment the Road and Trails Millage and continue planning the development of the B2B Trail and authorize staff to amend the Parks Fund Budget as necessary to align with B2B project planning. Roll call vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 4 Absent (Scribner, McKinney, Jefferson, Pratt), the motion was approved.***

## **B. Other Old Business**

None.

## **7. New Business**

### **A. City of Ann Arbor – Buy, Protect, Sell Program**

Remy Long, City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt Program Manager, presented an overview of the Greenbelt's "Buy, Protect, Sell" (BPS) process as an additional method for the city to protect farmland and ensure it is transferred to farmer ownership. The end outcome is intended to help address inequities in land ownership and access; protect farmland for producers and facilitate affordable and secure

land tenure. MSU Extension conducted a survey in Washtenaw County to identify needs of new and beginning farmers looking for land. Based on survey results, there is an interest from farmers to purchase protected farmland and there is a gap in knowledge of available land. For the BPS process, the City of Ann Arbor would purchase property in fee; conduct a public RFP process to seek producers wishing to purchase the land; select a viable farm business and sell the property to the farmer, while withholding a conservation easement on the property.

Mr. Ezekiel spoke in favor of the program. He asked what would happen if the farmer that purchased the land were to fail. Mr. Long responded that if the farm operation was not successful, the program could reserve the first right of refusal on the land and sell it to another farmer. He added that there would also be controls over the type of agriculture that was allowed on the property.

Mr. Joerg asked about the value of a property after the conservation easement has been established. Mr. Long responded that the market value of a property is generally 50-70% less once the development rights are removed through a conservation easement.

Commissioners Shink, Ezekiel, Bobrin, Joerg, and Marans all spoke in favor of the Buy, Protect, Sell program.

#### **B. B2B Trail – Miller-Smith Preserve Route**

Mr. Vaughn presented an overview of the possibility of the Border-to-Border Trail (B2B Trail) running through the southern edge of the Miller-Smith Preserve. The Miller-Smith preserve was purchased by NAPP in 2006 and 2008. The Smith portion of the preserve was donated to the Village of Dexter and subsequently donated to NAPP by the Village of Dexter. There is a donation agreement and deed restriction as part of the Smith donation to NAPP that stipulate the property must be maintained in accordance with the NAPP Ordinance and maintained as a park and nature preserve and no improvements or structures are to be constructed.

The planned B2B Trail route connecting Chelsea and Dexter passes adjacent to the Miller-Smith Preserve using a combination of road right-of-way and potentially a portion of the old Boland inter-urban railroad property, which is 33' wide and adjacent to the road right-of-way and owned by the Washtenaw County Road Commission. If the B2B Trail follows its current, planned alignment in the Miller-Smith Preserve area, in the road right-of-way and former Boland property, there will be some impact to the edge of the preserve near the parking lot. The proposed trail alignment is also close to one home that is set near the road. To address the impact on the private residence, WCPARC is exploring alternative routes. If an alternative route is approved, it would require that a portion of the Miller-Smith Preserve, mostly along the southern edge, be occupied by the B2B Trail. The proposed trail route is anticipated to have a construction impact to approximately 0.43 acres of the 29-acre preserve in addition to the area along the road frontage (0.25 acres). For reference, the parking area at the preserve occupies approximately 0.16 acres.

***It was moved by Ms. Shink and seconded by Mr. Joerg to direct staff to approach the City of Dexter to determine the legal implications of pursuing the alternative Border to Border trail alignment in Miller-Smith preserve in regards to the terms of the donation agreement for the property, and to bring back to the Commission for their review along with a public and partner input process strategy. Roll call vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 4 Absent (Scribner, McKinney, Jefferson, Pratt), the motion was approved.***

### **C. B2B Maintenance Agreement**

Mr. Vaughn outlined three projects within MDOT right-of-way where Commission authorization is required to execute maintenance agreements or permits, which will allow MDOT to advance to construction and eventual operation by WCPARC. The resolutions and agreements were reviewed by staff for consistency with similar, previously executed agreements between MDOT and WCPARC.

Project 1: Segment CS2 in Lyndon Township (Green Lake to N. Territorial) – due to MDOT staff transfers, this document was never completed although the trail segment is fully constructed. MDOT ROW occupancy along M-52.

Project 2: Segment C1 in the City of Chelsea and a portion of Sylvan Township (Werkner Road to Veterans Park) – this segment is under construction outside of the MDOT ROW and is anticipated to be complete this year. MDOT ROW occupancy along M-52.

Project 3: Segment DAA3 in Scio Township (Zeeb Road to Delhi Metropark) – this segment is fully engineered and waiting on Amtrak’s final approval for construction, which is anticipated to begin this year. MDOT ROW occupancy railroad along Huron River Drive.

Each maintenance agreement required a separate approval:

*It was moved by Mr. Ezekiel and seconded by Ms. Shink to execute the MDOT maintenance agreement for B2B Trail Segment CS2 in Lyndon Township. Roll call vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 4 Absent (Scribner, McKinney, Jefferson, Pratt), the motion was approved.*

*It was moved by Mr. Marans and seconded by Ms. Shink to approve the MDOT maintenance agreement for B2B Trail Segment C1 in the City of Chelsea and a portion of Sylvan Township. Roll call vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 4 Absent (Scribner, McKinney, Jefferson, Pratt), the motion was approved.*

*It was moved by Mr. Joerg and seconded by Ms. Shink to approve the MDOT maintenance agreement for B2B Trail Segment DAA3 in Scio Township. Roll call vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 4 Absent (Scribner, McKinney, Jefferson, Pratt), the motion was approved.*

### **D. Other New Business**

None.

### **8. Commissioners/Directors Comments**

Mr. Vaughn updated the Commission on a new policy that requires masks to be worn at all times in the Meri Lou Murray Recreation Center locker rooms. This is the only area of the facility that it is impossible to keep 6-ft of separation between patrons and it is poorly ventilated space. He also shared that the woman who spoke at the January meeting stopped by our front desk to thank our staff for implementing the new policy and said that the locker room was her biggest concern since that’s where her group gathers before and after swimming.

Mr. Vaughn shared that there was a meeting last month with the users of the Swift Run Dog Park to discuss the list of concerns and proposed park improvements. Additionally, Mr. Dehring provided some background on the establishment of the Swift Run Dog Park. Mr. Vaughn shared with the Commission that this was Jeff Dehring’s last commission meeting and that he would be retiring from

the county at the end of February. Mr. Vaughn and the Commissioners thanked Jeff for his years of service.

Ms. Shink commented that she went cross country skiing at Independence Lake and had a great time. She also shared that the park and trails were in excellent condition.

**9. Adjournment**

*It was moved by Ms. Shink and seconded by Mr. Marans to adjourn the meeting. All ayes.*

The meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m.