



Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission

MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: March 9, 2021
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Location: Zoom Digital Meeting

Members Present: Patricia Scribner, WCPARC President (attending from Pittsfield Township, MI); Janis Bobrin, WCPARC Vice President (attending from Ann Arbor, MI); Daniel Ezekiel, WCPARC Secretary/Treasurer (attending from Ann Arbor, MI), Ricky Jefferson (attending from Ypsilanti Township, MI), Robert Joerg (attending from Delta Township, MI), Robert Marans (attending from Bonita Springs, FL), Jo Ann McCollum (attending from Ypsilanti Township, MI), Brenda McKinney (attending from Superior Township, MI), and Jason Morgan (attending from Ann Arbor, MI)

Members Absent: Evan Pratt

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; Jeffrey Dehring, Park Planner; Kira Macyda, Park Planner; Peter Sanderson, Park Planner; Rosie Pahl-Donaldson, Park Planner; and Allison Krueger, Stewardship Manager

Others Present: Jeff Silagy, Michigan Wetland Board; Dianne Martin, ASTI Environmental

1. Call to Order/Moment of Silence

Ms. Scribner called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. with a moment of silence in appreciation of first responders.

2. Roll Call and Announcement of Location

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the February 9, 2021 regular meeting were included with the agenda material.

It was moved by Ms. McKinney and seconded by Mr. Marans to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2021 regular meeting, as amended. Roll call vote: 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 4 Absent (Jefferson, Pratt, Morgan, McCollum), the motion was approved.

4. Public Comment

None

5. Communications, Projects & Activities

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

It was moved by Ms. McKinney and seconded by Mr. Joerg to accept and file the Communications, Projects & Activities for the month of February 2021, as submitted. 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, 2 Absent (Pratt, Morgan), the motion was approved.

6. Consent Agenda

A. NAPP – Russell Property Sales Contract

It was moved by Ms. McCollum and seconded by Mr. Jefferson to authorize the preparation of a sales contract for the purchase of the J. Russell property in Scio Township contingent upon completion and satisfaction of all necessary due diligence and final approval by the Commission. Roll call vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, 2 Absent (Pratt, Morgan), the motion was approved.

B. NAPP – Award of Appraisal Contracts

It was moved by Ms. McCollum and seconded by Mr. Jefferson to authorize the award of a multi-year contracts to Value Midwest, Gerald Alcock Company, and Affinity Valuation Group for real estate appraisal services, per RFP #8048. Roll call vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays, 2 Absent (Pratt, Morgan), the motion was approved.

7. Financial & Recreation Reports – February 2021

A. Financial Reports

Mr. Brooks reported and stated that the total for the claims for the month of February was \$605,428.93.

It was moved by Mr. Marans and seconded by Mr. Ezekiel to accept and file the Financial Reports for the months of February 2021 as submitted. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (Pratt), the motion was approved.

B. Recreation Reports

Mr. Brooks reported on recreation reports for the month of February 2021.

It was moved by Ms. Bobrin and seconded by Mr. Joerg to accept and file the Recreation Reports for the month of February 2021 as submitted. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (Pratt), the motion was approved.

8. Old Business

A. Kosch Headwaters Preserve Wetland Project

Mr. Sanderson explained that The Michigan Wetlands Board (MiWB) and the Washtenaw County Road Commission (WCRC) have identified a need to establish a wetland mitigation bank within Washtenaw County. They hired a consultant to conduct a search for suitable locations using computer analysis. WCPARC properties were included in the analysis and the top candidate for mitigation potential across the county is a portion of the 153-acre Kosch Headwaters Preserve (Kosch) in Superior Township.

Mr. Sanderson reported that Michigan Transportation Funds are used by MiWB to establish bank sites and limit the eligibility of purchasing mitigation credits to public transportation projects. WCPARC will

benefit from the creation of the wetland bank to help mitigate for wetland impacts that are often necessary during construction of the B2B trail. The planned route of the B2B Trail follows the Huron River, Mill Creek, and connects to nearly 50 parks – many of which are deliberately located near waterbodies, which have associated wetlands. Due to the linear nature of the B2B Trail and limited right-of-way, minor wetland impacts are often unavoidable. The creation of a wetland bank creates an opportunity for WCPARC to mitigate the trail's impacts within the county, save money, and ensure that the restored wetland is stewarded in perpetuity. It also aids the WCRC who has provided WCPARC land to build the B2B Trail, technical/engineering assistance, and access to nearly \$8M in TAP grants.

Mr. Marans commented that the Kosch Preserve seemed to be a reasonable site based on its location within two watersheds. He asked if other WCPARC parks were being considered. Mr. Sanderson replied that other locations were considered, however, Kosch was the preferred option.

Ms. Bobrin asked who would decide how credits are allocated for the wetland bank. Mr. Sanderson responded that there will be an agreement executed before the project is implemented that will allocate the credits between WCRC and WCPARC.

Mr. Ezekiel commented that the Whitney project was an excellent example of a successful wetland project and he would be pleased if a WCPARC project turned out similarly.

Mr. Sanderson outlined next steps and explained that this proposal will be placed on a future agenda for action by the Commission.

B. B2B – Gallup Park Reconstruction Participation Request

Mr. Sanderson explained that the B2B Trail through Gallup Park in the City of Ann Arbor is one of the most popular trail segments in the county. The trail through the park spans from Parker Mill County Park on the east, to Mitchell Field (UM) on the west, 2.86 miles. The entire trail length was originally built in the 1980's and is in need of total replacement due to its pavement condition and insufficient capacity. The current trail is only 8-foot wide and modern standards recommend 10-foot width with 2-foot shoulders.

The City of Ann Arbor solicited bids to reconstruct the 1.03 miles of B2B Trail and eight bids were received. The low bid is by ET Mackenzie and the project budget is approximately \$711,255 including contingency. Mr. Sanderson reminded the Commission that during the 2020 Road and Trails millage renewal process, WCPARC allocated up to \$350,000 in funding towards this project from the millage if it was renewed. The City has requested a contribution of \$165k from WCPARC towards this project. The Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative has requested to participate in the project and those funds are proposed to flow through the Commission's contribution to the project.

Mr. Joerg questioned whether the contractor that was hired by the City was the best option for this project. He asked if the decision was final and offered to talk with his contacts at the City regarding this decision. Mr. Sanderson replied that he believed that the contract has been executed.

Ms. Bobrin explained that she had positive experiences with this contractor and asked that if a Commissioner approaches the City with comments about a specific contractor that it be done as an individual and not speaking on behalf of the Commission.

Mr. Ezekiel commented that this is a very popular segment of trail that is in need of improvement and he was happy that WCPARC could be a partner.

Ms. McCollum asked how wide the new trail would be. Mr. Sanderson responded that the pavement will be expanded from 8' to 10' feet wide and include a 2-foot shoulder on both sides.

It was moved by Ms. Bobrin and seconded by Ms. McKinney to authorize staff to execute a project agreement with the City of Ann Arbor to provide a total of \$165,000 (\$115,000 from the Road and Trails millage and \$50,000 from HWPI), towards the reconstruction of the Gallup Park segment of the B2B Trail. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (Pratt), the motion was approved.

C. Sharon Mills Raceway Wall Leak Repair Award

Mr. Dehring explained that in 2018 some minor water seepage was discovered outside the fieldstone and mortar raceway walls adjacent to the powerhouse of the mill building of Sharon Mills County Park. In spring 2019, it appeared that freeze-thawing action had increased the size and quantity of these leaks. Mr. Dehring stated that a steady stream of water is now present in several locations and it is evident that conditions are getting worse.

Mr. Dehring reported that a consultant was hired to assist in evaluating the damage and recommend a course of action. The first step was to install a temporary cofferdam within the walls of the raceway to eliminate the majority of waterflow to the work area, the next step is to engage a contractor with expertise working in wet environments, with historic fieldstone and mortar construction, and various waterproofing methods. We were fortunate to learn that the County's Office of Infrastructure Management (OIM) had recently contracted with Pullman SST, Inc. of Trenton, MI who specializes in this type of work. Pullman SST staff visited Sharon Mills to investigate site conditions and submitted a thorough proposal identifying various steps on how they would execute the project. The proposed cost to execute the project is \$69,950 and will be completed by no later than July 2.

Ms. McCollum asked about the 15% contingency and asked if staff anticipated additional costs. Mr. Dehring responded that there is always the possibility for change orders and the is the purpose of the contingency. He added that the Commission would be made aware if the costs exceed the contingency amount.

It was moved by Ms. McKinney and seconded by Mr. Ezekiel to authorize the award of a contract in the amount of \$69,950 to Pullman SST, Inc. of Trenton, MI for all work necessary to repair the leaking raceway walls at Sharon Mills County Park and shall include an additional 15% (\$10,500) contingency expenditure for potential change orders. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (Pratt), the motion was approved.

D. Other Old Business

None

9. New Business

A. Naming Recommendation for the Highland Preserve

Mr. Vaughn reported that the Highland Preserve currently consists of 53 acres in Superior Township, formerly known as the Clark Road Property, acquired in 2016. NAPP is in the process of purchasing an additional 20.5 acres that will be added to the preserve adjacent to the Highland Cemetery in the City of Ypsilanti, which should close by mid-2021. The 73.5-acre Highland Preserve is bisected by Clark Road and parking and trail development is currently under construction on the north side of the road. Both properties have been purchased with funds from the Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP) and include a small stream, core fen habitat, hillside prairie, an oak-hickory forest, and a known Native American trail once traversed the property.

Mr. Vaughn reminded the Commission that Janice Anschuetz, a long-time parks Commissioner, was a leading advocate for the protection of the Highland Preserve property and the establishment of the Superior Greenway. She is a resident of Ypsilanti and lives less than ¼-mile from the property – she is a frequent visitor of the preserve. Mr. Vaughn explained that, on behalf of the Commission, staff has

completed an application recommending that the Highland Preserve be renamed the Janice Anschuetz Highland Preserve.

Mr. Jefferson commented that naming the preserve in her honor is a great way to honor the legacy of Ms. Anschuetz.

Ms. McKinney voiced her strong support of the renaming proposal.

Mr. Marans also voiced his support and asked if there could be a ceremony scheduled this summer to officially celebrate the naming. Mr. Vaughn offered to coordinate something with Ms. Anschuetz.

It was moved by Ms. McKinney and seconded by Mr. Jefferson to authorize the proposed renaming of the Highland Preserve to honor Janice Anschuetz based on her leadership in the preservation of this property and her 47 years of exemplary service to WCPARC and the residents of Washtenaw. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (Pratt), the motion was approved.

B. NAPP – DeForest Superior Partnership

Ms. Pahl-Donaldson reported that NAPP received a nomination in 2019 for the DeForest property in Superior Township for a conservation easement, and the property was subsequently scored and included in ALPAC's 2020 annual prioritization of properties. After some discussions with the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt and the landowners, it was agreed that the Greenbelt would take the lead on this project, with WCPARC's pending participation.

Ms. Pahl-Donaldson explained that the Assessment & Prioritization Mapping labeled the easement parcel medium-low quality but did not prioritize it for preservation. Superior Township properties generally score a little lower because it is the township in which NAPP spent the most on acquisition. She added that this property is a priority for the Ann Arbor Greenbelt program. In addition, the family has nominated additional land that will be able to expand the block of protected land.

An appraisal was completed in February 2021 and identified the value of the 71.5-acre conservation easement as \$475,000 or \$7,583/acre. The Greenbelt is requesting 50% from WCPARC. The Greenbelt is also making a small request from Superior Township, that would replace Greenbelt funds. ALPAC recommended to partner with the Greenbelt and contribute \$237,500 at their February 2021 meeting. The Greenbelt will cover the remaining FMV value, as well as closing and due diligence. The Greenbelt will also be responsible for monitoring and enforcing the conservation easement.

It was moved by Ms. McKinney and seconded by Mr. Joerg to partner with the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt for the purchase of a conservation easement on the DeForest Superior property in Superior Township and to contribute \$237,500 toward the purchase, contingent upon attorney review of documents and execution of participation agreement. An additional \$7,500 is authorized as a contribution to the stewardship special revenue fund. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (Pratt), the motion was approved.

C. NAPP – Fishbeck Farm Partnership

Ms. Pahl-Donaldson explained that the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt received an application in 2020 for the Fishbeck farm property for the purchase of a conservation easement. The Greenbelt subsequently forwarded the application to NAPP for review in anticipation of requesting a partnership contribution. The property was included in ALPAC's Round 20 (2020) review of properties.

The Fishbeck property is on the south side of Joy Road, where Tower Road ends, in Superior Township. The Agricultural Assessment and Prioritization Mapping identified the property's tax parcel as medium-high and prioritized it for its nearness to existing protected land (Patch Expansion). The Fishbeck property received 56/88 points on ALPAC's scoring system. The Commission's scoring system for NAPP properties

yields 53/100 points. Superior Township properties generally score a little lower because it is the township in which NAPP spent the most on acquisition.

Ms. Pahl Donaldson reported that an appraisal was completed in September 2020 and identified the value of the 63.331-acre conservation easement as \$480,000 or \$7,579/acre. The Greenbelt is requesting 50% from ALPAC. The Greenbelt is also making a small request from Superior Township, that would replace Greenbelt funds. ALPAC recommended to partner with the Greenbelt and contribute \$240,000 at their February 2021 meeting. The Greenbelt will cover the remaining FMV value, as well as closing and due diligence. The Greenbelt will also be responsible for monitoring and enforcing the conservation easement.

It was moved by Ms. McCollum and seconded by Ms. McKinney to partner with the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt for the purchase of a conservation easement on the Fishbeck III property in Superior Township and to contribute \$240,000 toward the purchase, contingent upon attorney review of documents and execution of participation agreement. An additional \$7,500 is authorized as a contribution to the stewardship special revenue fund. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (Pratt), the motion was approved.

D. NAPP – Kress Partnership

Ms. Pahl-Donaldson reported that the Legacy Land Conservancy has been working on placing a conservation easement on the 226-acre Kress property in Freedom Township. Legacy forwarded the property's information to NAPP in 2019 for review in anticipation of requesting a contribution. Both ALPAC and NATAC included the property in their 2019 annual review of nominations.

Straddling Pleasant Lake Road in Freedom Township, just up the road from WCPARC's Uphaus easement, is the centennial Kress farm. At 226 acres, it is one of the top ten largest farms that has come through ALPAC. ALPAC's scoring system produced a score of 56/88. The Agricultural Assessment & Prioritization Mapping did not prioritize the land. While NATAC was not asked by ALPAC to participate in the funding for this project, NATAC did visit and review the 60 acres of forest on the property, and they classified Kress as a Tier 1 priority for NATAC. The southern forest has particularly hilly topography, owing to its likely identity as a remnant glacial hill, and the dry forest system at the highest points is underrepresented in NAPP's property catalogue.

Ms. Pahl-Donaldson explained that the Legacy Land Conservancy is working with a confidently estimated fair market value of \$659,837, approximately \$2,920 per acre. Legacy applied for and received a USDA-ACEP-ALE grant for this property for \$323,879 (49%). They are requesting a \$265,000 (40%) contribution from WCPARC towards the purchase price. Legacy is funding the remaining \$70,958 and would be responsible for monitoring and enforcing the conservation easement. After review of the nomination, ALPAC recommended to partner with the Legacy Land Conservancy and contribute \$265,000 toward the easement purchase.

Mr. Ezekiel pointed out that the percentages do not quite add up correctly for the contribution amount shown in presentation. He also stated that he felt that this proposal was the strongest of the three because it is outside the Greenbelt, in a community with no preservation program, it's large parcel, with no building exceptions, and low per-acre cost.

It was moved by Mr. Ezekiel and seconded by Ms. McKinney to partner with the Legacy Land Conservancy for the purchase of a conservation easement on the Kress property in Freedom Township and contribute \$265,000 toward the purchase, and a contribution of \$7,500 to the stewardship special revenue fund to cover potential future costs associated with monitoring and enforcement of the conservation easement, contingent upon attorney review of documents and execution of participation agreement. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (Pratt), the motion was approved.

10. Commissioners/Directors Comments

A. Working Session Overview

Mr. Vaughn provided an update regarding two upcoming Commission working sessions. He explained that the first would be held on March 23rd and would focus on the development of Staebler Farm and plans for the construction of new B2B trail segments. The second working session, scheduled for April 19th, will address plans for renovation at Meri Lou Murray Rec Center and the opportunity to participate in the planning and construction of an Eastside Community Center. Also, we plan present the Capital Improvement Plan for all parks/facilities and an overview of our development budget.

B. NAPP Update

Ms. Trocchio provided an update on the status for the subcommittee charged with addressing concerns related to building envelopes associated with NAPP conservation easement acquisitions. A second meeting is scheduled for March 23rd with representatives from NATAC and ALPAC and members of the subcommittee.

Ms. Trocchio also provide an update on that status of the Botsford and Buesser NAPP properties. The Botsford Property has not closed due to pending litigation between a private entity and the City of Ann Arbor. She also updated the commission that the Buesser property and the building envelope included in the conservation easement has been reduced from 4 acres to 2.5 acres based on the Commission's comments.

11. Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Jefferson and seconded by Mr. Morgan to adjourn the meeting. 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (Pratt), the motion was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:57 p.m.