Flathead County Weed/Parks/Recreation
MINUTES
Special Meeting of the Board of Directors
Meeting Date: May 10, 2021

Members of the Board in attendance:
James Buechle, Clyde Fisher, Lori Moran, Jessica Treweek, Pete Woll

Members of the Board not in attendance:
All Board members were in attendance.

Also in attendance:
Chris Maestas, Interim Superintendent; Gordon Jewett, Assistant Superintendent; Haily Hoff, Clerk

Others Present:
Brad Abell, Bonnie Streeter, Whitney Aschenwald, Amanda Davey, Linda Tutvedt, Cody Jensen, Pete Jellar, Paul Mutascio, Ali Allen Shinn

Call to Order
A special meeting of the Board of Directors for Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation was held in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana, on May 10, 2021. The meeting convened at 8:30 AM, President Woll presiding.

Approval of Minutes
Minutes for the April 5, 2021, meeting and the April 9, 2021 meeting of the Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation Board of Directors were distributed to the members of the Board.

Jessica Treweek moved to approve the April 5, 2021 and April 9, 2021 Board minutes.
Jim Buechle seconded the motion.
There being no discussion and all in favor, the motion was carried.

TA Grant Funding Opportunity for Trail Maintenance
Chris Maestas met with Flathead County Finance Director, Amy Dexter, and Flathead County Grant Administrator, Whitney Aschenwald, regarding potential grant funding for maintenance of paved trails. For budgeting purposes, the needs of the Flathead County Parks & Recreation Department would need to be split out into three separate grants. 1) Whitefish Stage Switchback trail to access Kalispell City's Lawrence Park. Total estimated grant request for this project would be near $600K and the County's portion of match funding would be approximately $91K. 2) Rails to Trails pavement preservation. Grant request $200K; County match = $152K. 3) School paths pavement preservation. Grant request $200K; County match = $108K. If all three grants were awarded it would cost Flathead County approximately $350K and would upgrade the trail rating to a nine, putting the trail system in good shape. Mr. Maestas also mentioned that he is working Amy Dexter on a potential annual transfer into the trail fund to better handle maintenance issues going forward.

Whitney Aschenwald explained that Dave Moline runs the Montana Department of Transportation's TA grant program and he provided her with example budgets from similar projects. Construction engineering for a similar project was 18% and Mrs. Aschenwald felt that this was a conservative figure that seemed appropriate for the pavement preservation projects we are discussing. Robert Peccia & Associates has done much of the engineering work and the budget is smaller. These are simple projects.

Jessica Treweek moved to support the applications for all three grant projects:

1) **Whitefish Stage Switchback trail**
2) **School paths pavement preservation**
3) **Rails to Trails pavement preservation**

Jim Buechle seconded the motion. Discussion followed regarding separating the projects, assigning priority and potential competition with the Evergreen District sidewalk project. All in favor, the motion was carried.

Lori Moran asked about the possibility of tearing out the Whitefish Stage switchback trail system if the grant funding is not awarded. Chris spoke to County Attorney, Tara Fugina, in regard to that option and because it was initially constructed with federal funds there are certain maintenance requirements that she would have to confirm.

Public Comment

Bonnie Streeter with the Back-Country Horsemen complimented Jed Fisher and Gordon Jewett on work done thus far relative to the equestrian crossing project at Herron Park. Pete Woll stated that the 124 permit has not yet been submitted to the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks. Mrs. Streeter applied for and was awarded a $750 grant from the Back-Country Horsemen of America that needs to be spent in 2021. Foys to Blacktail committed to match 10% of that grant. Pete explained that the ground work will be done right and timing is crucial. Gordon Jewett stated that all correspondence with FWP relative to this work and permit needs to be coming from the Flathead County Parks Department. Pete Woll added that he is waiting for a call back from Kenny with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Brad Abell added that he is looking into a solution to utilize volunteer labor.

Church Slough Improvements – Cody Jensen

Chris Maestas spoke with Pete Jellar previously regarding a potential donation of $100K for improvements at Church Slough. The Commissioners would be responsible for formally accepting a donation of this magnitude and the Parks Department would be responsible for keeping any approved work legal and within the budget. Cody Jensen with 406 Engineering and the Flathead Chapter of Walleyes Unlimited presented a diagram of proposed improvements to this access site.

Pete Jellar has worked on projects with Fish Wildlife & Parks in other areas with warm water species. They would like to see a vaulted toilet, boat dock, pavilion, improved parking and possibly a security gate. Chris Maestas added that the neighbors should be addressed and a legal opinion from the County Attorney would be imperative based on a prior law suit developing this area. Mr. Maestas asked for a prioritization of projects in the event that all of the proposed work will not be able to accomplish all of the work with the generous donation. Flathead County will not be able to absorb any additional costs related to this potential project.

Lori Moran made a motion for preliminary approval for Chris to begin working with Walleyes Unlimited on proposed improvement projects at Church Slough.
Jessica Treweek seconded the motion.
There being no discussion and all in favor, the motion was carried.

Herron Park Equestrians Trail Obstacle Course – Linda Tutvedt

Linda Tutvedt explained that the Herron Park Equestrians has a number of portable obstacles that they would like to set up in the area where the portable stables used to be and store them in an empty stall during the off season. Gordie Jewett was agreeable to that use. Ali Allen Shinn is a certified jump builder and has been tasked with evaluating the current jumps within Herron Park. All jumps will be

portable in the future. Linda Tutvedt could provide a trail map for the mower operators to clear the jumps that are in the brush.

Jim Buechle moved to support moving forward in working with Herron Park Equestrians.
Jessica Treweek seconded the motion.
There being no discussion and all in favor, the motion was carried.

Sliter Park Agreements

A nearly expired five-year lease agreement with Pacificorp is up for renewal. This lease agreement has been re-executed every five years since the early 1980s.

An annual MOU with the Community Foundation for a Better Bigfork in the amount of $3,500 was not executed last year. Paul Mutascio explained that the Community Foundation for a Better Bigfork is a 501-c3 and relies solely on donations. Many of the fundraising events had to be cancelled last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Mr. Mutascio did state that the CFBB would be willing to pay the lease payment of $100 per year to Pacificorp on behalf of Flathead County. It was Mr. Mutascio's understanding that the Parks Department only visits Bigfork one day per week. Mr. Jewett explained that they are only out to mow parks in that area one day per week but maintenance requests and vandalism issues, specifically for Sliter, are much more frequent than that. Mr. Mutascio added that their group has contributed a lot in adding bathrooms, the stage, over $11K spent in electrical system repairs as well as hiring an independent contractor to keep the restrooms clean and stocked daily in the summer. It has been a collaborative effort for many years and considering the pressures experienced by CFBB, Paul would like to see the dollar amount of that MOU lowered to $1,500 - $2,000 instead of $3,500.00. It was mentioned that security cameras could help deter some of the vandalism that frequents Sliter Park.

Jim Buechle made a motion to proceed in the process of renewing the five-year lease extension with Pacificorp to continue maintaining Sliter Park.
Jessica Treweek seconded the motion.
Discussion continued regarding the potential contribution from CFBB and the budget and labor impacts Sliter Park has on the Parks Department as a whole. Gordon Jewett asked Paul Mutascio if CFBB would be interested in taking over the lease for Sliter Park. Mr. Mutascio answered that they are unable to financially take on that responsibility and he feels that Sliter Park is a regional park. Last year CFBB paid their independent contractor $3,900.
There being no further discussion and all in favor, the motion was carried.

Parks & Recreation Report

Amanda Davey reported that she has recently concluded youth basketball and volleyball programs. Enforcing the school district's mask policy was exceptionally difficult. Chris Maestas added that Amanda has done a great job in dealing with those people gracefully and with professionalism. Bob Tuman attempted to recruit some of his fellow Rotarians to volunteer checking in players/parents and enforcing the mask wearing. They all declined after learning what the task entailed. Daybreak Rotary did increase their annual donation to this program to help offset the cost of extra staff, masks and hand sanitizer in order to comply with school district's policies. Mrs. Davey stated that she is ready for outdoor sports. Youth T-ball, Adult Softball, Adult Beach Volleyball and Adult 3 on 3 basketball are scheduled to start soon. Jessica Treweek asked about the potential for surplus park property. Pete asked Chris to compile of list of possibilities and put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

Weed Department Report
An annual meeting with the Montana Department of Transportation was held remotely. Ventenata is a rising concern and everyone is defensively on the lookout. The annual contract will be set at $75K for the upcoming fiscal year, as it has been in past years. Gordie is still one staff member short which will make spray applications more difficult to complete this season. Roadside mowers will start rolling the first week of June. Two vehicles have been flagged for surplus. Meetings have been scheduled with DNRC and FWP regarding contract work. The Montana Weed Control Association is putting on a live crew training in Hamilton on May 26th. Dixie Pancoast has been hired to replace Michele Haarr.

Chemical Bid Recommendation
Nutrien Ag Solutions is the sole bidder at $39,808.00. Formal bids are not required for purchase amounts less than $80K. The chemical purchase for the Flathead County Weed District has been less than $80K for several years. Henceforth, Chris Maestas feels that the District can go back to an informal process of gathering bids internally.

Jim Buechle moved to recommend awarding this year's chemical bid to Nutrien Ag Solutions in the amount of $39,808.00.
Lori Moran seconded the motion.
There being no discussion and all in favor, the motion was carried.

FY22 Proposed Budget
Chris Maestas stated that as a fiscally responsible department, we like to be sure that we are saving our taxpayers and stakeholders the most amount of money. Trends were identified and a budget baseline was set using data over the course of the previous four years. Last year's budget totals were unusual due to the events worldwide. Parks has a healthy cash balance at just under 24% and is not allowed to exceed 30%. This year's budget has been decreased by 5% based on historic actuals. Two capital improvement projects are scheduled for completion. Ben Williams water hookup and Herron Park parking expansion. The existing parking lot at Herron needs attention before it is expanded. Dave & Travis from the Road Department will bid the work for sealing and repair. They will also give us an estimate on a new lot. The Weed Department has a 14% cash balance reserve. Upcoming capital improvements include two pickup trucks, plow loader attachment, trailer, deck/pump replacement for a roadside mower and chemical shed upgrades. Discussion continued regarding the source of the trail maintenance fund. Chris stated that he will follow up with Amy Dexter in Finance about what, if any, state statutes may preclude a fund like this one to be included in pooled investments to gain interest.

Jim Buechle moved to advance the proposed Weed/Parks budget for fiscal year 2022.
Lori Moran seconded the motion.
There being no discussion and all in favor, the motion was carried.

Other Business
Gordon Jewett complimented Chris Maestas on the quality work he has been demonstrating as Interim Director. He has quickly been able to ascertain priority tasks and develop a great rapport with the staff.

Matters of the Board
There were no matters of the Board.

Adjourn

Jim Buechle moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:49 AM.
Lori Moran seconded the motion.
There being no discussion and all in favor, the motion was carried.

Documents Submitted to the Board

406 Engineering diagram of proposed improvements – Church Slough Fishing Access

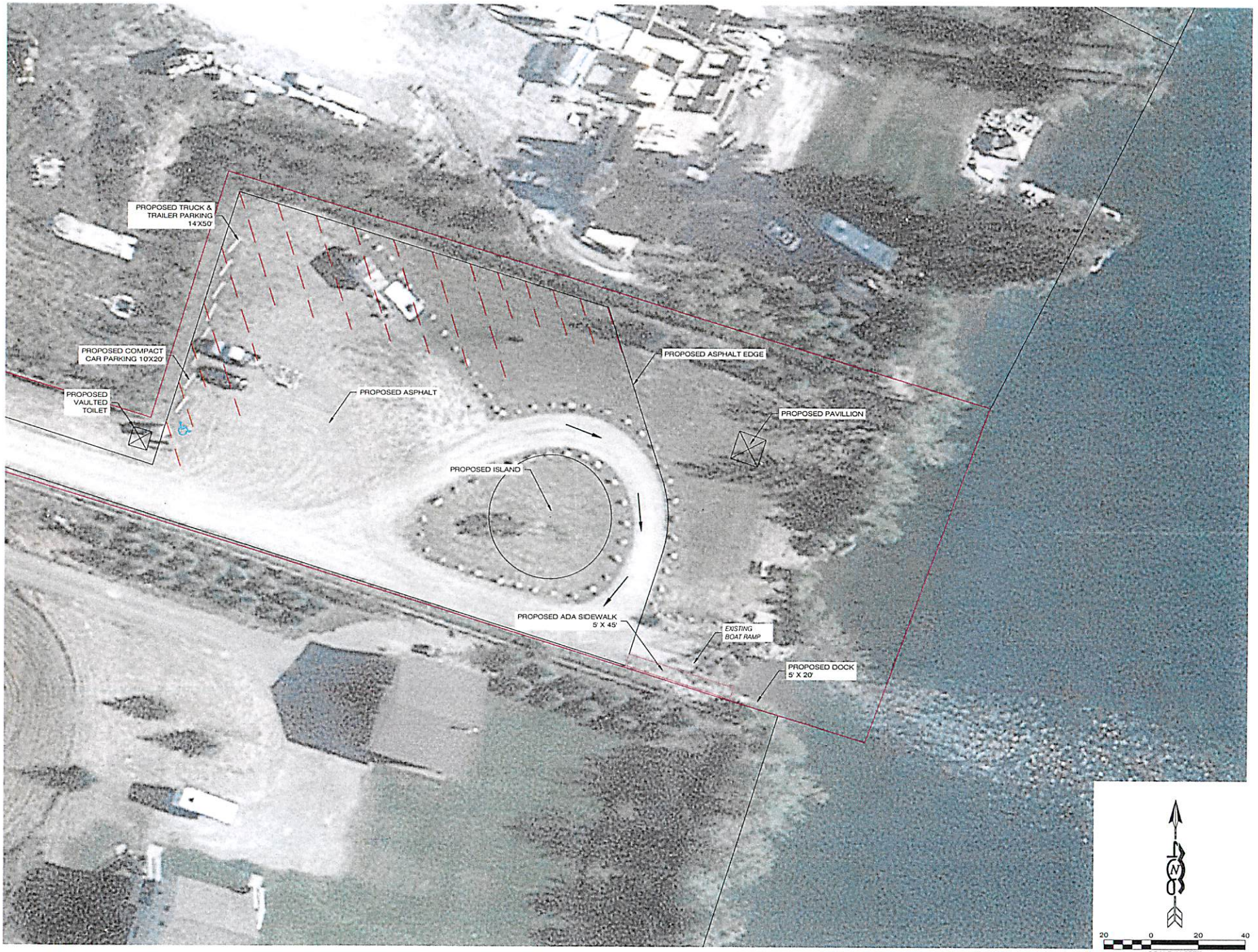
Approved:

Pete C. Woll

Pete Woll, Board President

6/14/21

Date



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DESIGNED: CJ
DRAFTED: CJ
CHECKED: -
DATE: -

REVISIONS | DATE

LOCATION: WAGNER LANE
PARK LOT OF PLAT OF RIVER VISTA
SEC 36, T28N, R21W
KALISPELL, MT 59901

PREPARED FOR: WALLEYES UNLIMTED
FLATHEAD CHAPTER

PROJECT NAME: CHURCH SLOUGH
FISHING ACCESS IMPROVEMENT

SHEET TITLE: SITE PLAN

406 PROJECT NO.
-

SHEET: 5 OF 5

PLOT DATE: 5/3/2021 4:23 PM

DWG LOCATION: C:\USERS\CODY\DESKTOP\CH SLOUGH.DWG