

**Flathead County Weed/Parks/Recreation & Building Maintenance
Conference Room – 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell MT 59901
Board Meeting Minutes
January 10, 2011**

Board Members:

Present: James Buechle, Clyde Fisher, Ray Sanders, Jim Watson

Absent: Elise Robocker

In Attendance:

Jed Fisher, Superintendent; Gordon Jewett, Assistant Superintendent; and Michele Haarr

Others Present:

Jeff Hutten – Kila Park

Tammy Hutten – Kila Park

Allen Sieler – Bibler Trail

Tamara Tanberg – Lakeside Parks Advisory Committee

Linda Tutvedt - Friends of Foys/Herron Advisory Committee

Jim Vashro – Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Sue Wallace – Kila Park

Andy Young – Friends of Foys/Herron Advisory Committee

Proceedings

The meeting was called to order at 8:34 a.m. by Chairman Sanders. The December 6, 2010, meeting minutes were approved.

Jim Watson made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2010, Weeds/Parks Board of Directors' meeting.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

All in favor ~ the motion was carried.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

US Fish, Wildlife & Parks Report – Jim Vashro

Street Pond – Jim Vashro reported that this is a nice addition to recreational opportunities. Photos of the excavation last May through the current date were passed around.

Robin Street spent 4 years working to complete a 5 acre pond on a 13 acre parcel, with donations from various sources totaling 180k. There is a little more work to be completed on handicapped access and the unveiling is planned for April 30th.

Church Slough – Vashro reported that US Fish, Wildlife & Parks is still involved in the lawsuit. A petition was submitted to dismiss the lawsuit but there has been no ruling as of this date.

A two-part petition to close Church Slough has been drafted indicating 1) no boating from March 1st through April 10th due to a large number of migrating water fowl; and 2) no wake during the remainder of the year. This petition will be discussed at Fish Wildlife and Parks Commission meeting Thursday at 9:40 am. The petition will be put out for a public hearing and an environmental review, with final action anticipated in March.

Superintendent Jed Fisher added that he received a telephone call from County Attorney Peter Steele who said that Dennis Carver’s attorney, Angie LeDuc, proposed to restrict the launch by making it narrower. Mr. Fisher does not think this makes sense and would rather see a “no wake zone”. It is difficult to restrict water access for Jet Skis which is 80% of the wake.

GPS Mapping Units Update – Jed Fisher

Superintendent Fisher reported that the dispute with CartoPac regarding the GPS mapping units appears to be resolved. Concerns included substandard programming and intermittent shut downs. Evan Carter and Bill Weseman of the Weed Department were called in to review the modifications to the program and they are both relatively happy with the improvements. Assistant Superintendent Jewett reported that he will wait until mapping will begin in the spring to give a report on the units.

Donating Parks to Low Income Housing Projects – Jed Fisher

Commissioner Jim Dupont and Chris Hyatt, Manager of Habitat for Humanity, have suggested the possibility of donating surplus park land for Low Income Housing. Superintendent Fisher indicated that there may be park land unsuitable for development, Many Lakes being one example that would be appropriate, with an appraisal and survey occurring before any determination is made. This would be good public relations, supply a need, and put the property on tax rolls. Board members were generally in favor of this suggestion and Jim Watson commented that some legislation exists for government transfers. Fisher will evaluate a few areas to determine if we want to invest time as some properties will cost more to surplus. Blasdel & Sonju are working on legislation to free up the process in order to avoid surveys & appraisals.

Community Park in Kila – Jeff Hutten

Jeff Hutten reported that there was a field trip to the proposed 3.5 acre Kila Park property on November 9th and a very positive public meeting occurred on December 7th which was attended by 16 people. \$4500 has been raised to date with several fundraising efforts ongoing. A Visitor Services Grant application will be submitted in October for interpretative signing. Jim Watson suggested asking for help from Deb Pierce of the Flathead County Grant Support Office, and advised that Mr. Hutten connect with a representative of US Fish, Wildlife and Parks as a source of funding.

Pertinent action items are ADA, soils constraints, and wetlands. A preliminary review showed the park location is not on any wetland inventory. The main feature reviewed is the old railroad spur which is approximately 1,000’ and is 5’ – 6’ higher elevation than the surrounding area.

Mr. Hutten displayed a schematic (attachment 1) showing the Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area, railroad spur; pedestrian crosswalk; Post Office; Kila School, Great Northern Historic Trail, and the Trail Staging Area.

Development of park in stages was discussed, as well as:

- Public toilets – There is a need for public toilets due to the proximity of the trail and heavy use.
- Garbage – Pack-in and pack-out.
- Parking – School parking can get crowded during the school year. The possibility of using the Trail Staging Area was discussed.
- Maintenance – Will residents be assessed on tax bills?
- Vandalism – How to avoid and/or minimize vandalism.
- Water Source – There are 2 potential water sources which are surveyed in on blueprints for the mill.
- Purpose – Educational: plant garden; blinds for water fowl viewing; geology; historical information; observation tower.

Offers to help with the project came from Dan Casey of the American Bird Conservatory, the Lion's Club and the Eagle Scouts. It is anticipated that the Kila School Board, US Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Rails to Trails will be involved. A representative of Rails to Trails reviewed the site and it was agreed to work cooperatively to avoid duplication of efforts. Cooperation with Fish, Wildlife and Parks is critical because of their desire to protect the Waterfowl Protection Area which has the busiest flyway in Northwest Montana in the spring and fall. This needs to meld with a desire to provide a unique educational opportunity for children and adults.

Tammy Hutten commented on the importance of involving Kila and other schools who will all enjoy the opportunity. Kila's school principal commented that if children area engaged it will transfer to the parents. The core of an advisory group exists and Mr. Hutten asked the Board if it was okay to form the group. Superintendent Fisher endorsed the effort and it was discussed whether to broaden the scope of the group beyond the development of Kila to extend its influence west to Bitterroot Lake, along with trail connectivity to Libby. It was agreed to keep the scope of the group limited to Kila for the initial effort.

Clyde Fisher motioned to authorize formation of an Advisory Group for the development of Kila Park to encompass Kila and the Smith Lake area.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion.

All in favor ~ the motion was carried.

Vending Policy, Pony Club, Hang Tags – Linda Tutvedt

- Vending – Linda Tutvedt reported that at a recent meeting with County Attorney Peter Steele, Jed Fisher, Gordon Jewett and Michele Haarr, it was established that it is legal to have food vendors in Herron Park, with the submission of a license from the City of Kalispell or the County Health Department. Mrs. Tutvedt stated that the City of Kalispell now has approximately 30 approved vendors, all with a 1 million liability umbrella.

Tutvedt summarized the recent meeting, also submitted via email:

Jed wants to do vending correctly, if it is to be done. It needs to have;

- a. Minimum impact on Employees and
 - b. Minimum expense
 - c. The approval of the County Attorney.
2. It is possible to have food vendors in the County Parks. It requires the same process as renting Herron Park for an event; the permission of the board or their agent (aka. Jed)
 3. Food Vendors need to have;
 - a. A license from the City/County Health Department
 - b. Insurance – their own or under the event holders umbrella.
 4. Vendors at Foy's Lake summer of 2009 were;
 - a. Causing parking and traffic/safety issues, not health issues or legal issues.
 - b. This property appears to be a part of Foy's Lake Park, and is managed as part of the park, but is actually on the State right of way, not county property.
 5. Vendors could be caterers for events in County Parks. They would be;
 - a. Invited by the event organizer,
 - b. Have a photo copy of their license and proof of insurance attached to the event organizer's application to use the park.
 6. This would not require board approval every time a caterer is desired; once the board approves the policy, Catering would be a standard question on the Park Rental form.
 7. This would;
 - a. Allow organizations to have caterers in Parks
 - b. Allow the Parks Dept knowledge/safety of vendors
 - c. Have minimum impact on Park Employees
 - d. Have minimum expense
 - e. Be Legal & acceptable to the County Attorney

Superintendent Fisher endorsed the policy on a limited trial basis for Herron Park specifically to be set up by organizer on a case-by-case basis, with the requirement that it does not increase staff time. One of his concerns is a vendors may drive by, see vending, and decide it is okay without getting authorization. At this time we will not ask for any type of payment from a vendor as it will be more of a service. New signage may be needed. Staff approval will be required.

Andy Young commented that it is 5 – 7 miles to the closest convenience store.

Jim Buechle made a motion to approve caterer's on for a limited trial basis at Herron Park for caterers who are invited by the Park/Facility Permit applicant, has provided a photo copy of their license issued by Flathead County Health Department, and proof of insurance attached to the Park/Facility Permit Applicant.

Jim Watson seconded the motion.

All in favor ~ the motion was carried.

- Pony Club – Tutvedt distributed a summary of Pony Club expenses and income for the year 2007 (attachment 2), indicating there was effectively no profit. She presented a letter stating that she would like to see the Pony Club happen again this year (attachment 3), however the sponsor, FCTA, cannot afford the park rental fee and would like to proceed on a donation basis. This is a wonderful educational experience for kids and will keep them off of the streets.

There was discussion regarding the possibility of scholarships, and/or payment in kind through volunteering and how to structure the event to avoid setting a precedent for other activities at other parks. The Board commented that the facility and grounds will need to be left in as good as or better shape than received.

Tutvedt would like to have a policy in place that would be in the Parks Master Plan and recommended a scholarship type process. She will bring Pony Club dates to the next meeting.

- Hang Tags – Tutvedt presented a hang tag (attachment 4) and suggested a fee of \$40 per tag and indicated it would be a money maker beyond the donation request currently posted at the park entry. FCTA is working on a list of rules which will be included on the reverse side.

Assistant Superintendent Gordon Jewett endorsed the concept and commented that he would like to see a sticker rather than a hang tag. In the current set up people sometimes pay the donation but most of the time they do not. There was discussion regarding having the tag apply to activities such as dogs in the park, bicycles, skis, and/or sleds.

Linda Tutvedt is to come up with a final sticker/hang tag which she prefers over a sticker because the tag will include some rules. Linda will work with Assistant Superintendent Gordon Jewett and bring the hang tag back in a month.

Foys/Herron Advisory Report – Andy Young

Andy Young complimented the Department for the care of Herron Park, particularly the grooming during the winter months. A trail counter has been installed at the upper kiosk and during the month of December there were 90 – 95 users per day, compared to 35 at the same location one year ago. These counts do not include the meadow or the ski hill, the two other access locations.

The clearing of the road to the sled hill is good and has more direct access. The next step is to take out the old road running along the ridge. There are currently two access points: Gate One at Foys to Blacktail and the access to the sledding hill. The west of Gate One is a logical location to add another access point.

There has not been much further discussion regarding a dog park but the Committee has not met since the fall and there will be another meeting in two weeks. Assistant Superintendent Jewett reported that loose dogs can be as much as ½ mile away and it is difficult to catch the owner. Periodically a snowcat has been used on Saturdays to monitor and educate. Jewett stated that the situation is better than it used to be but there are still many unleashed dogs. It was agreed to enforce the existing rules for awhile and review again.

The stall doors have been completed on the west side so the stables facing the east and west are now complete.

Jim Watson requested to have the Foys to Blacktail – Recreation and Trails Survey removed from the website and have the results compiled. In addition, a final copy of the Master Plan and the County Trails Plan need to be posted.

Public Comment

Alan Sieler of the Sam Bibler Trail reported that the trail construction is complete, with a few areas that need to be redone. There was discussion regarding how to keep kids in cars off of the trail, which will eventually connect to Kalispell. Alan reported that the contractor was okay but the engineering could be improved.

Lakeside Advisory Report – Tamara Tanberg

Tamara Tanberg reported that the grant check came in from the United States Tennis Association. A thank you will be sent on County letterhead. The tennis courts are complete, all vendors have been paid and there is planning for a grand opening.

West Shore News reported that Mark Blasdel is working on volunteerism being acceptable in the parks. It was questioned whether the Advisory Committee should send an endorsement. Jim Watson commented that the government can't lobby the government; however Ms. Tanberg may do this as a private party.

There was discussion regarding cash-in-lieu money going toward a wide shoulder pedestrian trail from the County line to Somers, with the goal to be able to go boating, dock, put on boots and hike up to Forest Service land.

Middle Forks Parks Advisory Committee – Larry Parsons

There was no one present from the Middle Forks Advisory Committee.

Foys to Blacktail – Jim Watson

Jim Watson reported that purchase of an additional 40 acres is complete and the Herron Park has been expanded from 120 acres to 160 acres. The process to accomplish this will be used as a model for purchase of another 40 acres for Phase II, for which funding is substantially complete, as well as Phase III. If the State come in with a 50/50 match Phases IV and V will be possible.

The grooming has been spectacular at Herron meadow and road. Plum Creek has an easement on their property for Foys to Blacktail and will use County equipment on their property to complete the grooming.

Trails/PATHS Advisory Management – Jim Watson

Jim Watson reported that Alex Hogle of the Flathead County Planning Department is working on a document for policy that will state how the Departments will work together on the administration of the County Trails Plan. The trails are a part of the Flathead County Parks & Recreation Department for taxpayers' use and enjoyment. The People, Athletics, Travel, Health & Safety (PATHS) Committee will get a new job description and will monitor all things trail related, including how to apply for CTEP grant funding. In addition, this group can track progress of various trails and if any are lagging there is potential for reallocation to another trail project.

Three of the existing PATHS members are planning to continue on this Committee. It is anticipated that each of the Parks Advisory Committees will have participating member, along with advertisement for new members. Mr. Hogle's document should be complete and ready for review by February 1st with the goal to have it in front of the Commissioners by April.

Vetville Park Update – Jed Fisher

Assistant Superintendent Gordon Jewett met with Rick Moore of the DNRC at Vetville Park to do a site tour. Mr. Moore does not feel comfortable with development of this park and advised to proceed with extreme caution. He suggested that the County monitor it over a 12 month period and to have the Corps of Engineers get involved. Superintendent Fisher stated that he is not prepared to spend any money on further activity at this park until the viability of development is determined; however, some clean-up work is anticipated after a review by the Corps of Engineers. Jim Buechle cautioned that no ground be disturbed during any clean-up effort.

Other Business

Superintendent Fisher reported that he will meet with Paul Mutascio next month to discuss a 5-year lease renewal with PacifiCorp for Sliter's Park. Expectations of staff will be discussed as well as the possibility of letting the Bigfork core group take over as sublessee for \$1.00 will be considered.

Adjourn

Jim Watson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion.

All in favor ~ motion carried.

The next Board meeting will be held on Wednesday February 2, 2011, at 8:30 a.m., in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana.