

**Flathead County Weed/Parks/Recreation & Building Maintenance
Conference Room – 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell MT 59901
Board Meeting Minutes
February 2, 2011**

Board Members:

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

Absent: There was no one absent.

In Attendance:

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

Others Present:

Tom Esch – Foys to Blacktail Trails

Dan Fagre – Middle Forks Parks Advisory Committee

Skip Gilmore – Bigfork Parks Advisory Committee

Jeff Hutten – Kila Park

Cindy Magnotta – Lakeside Parks Advisory Committee

Elizabeth Makman – Herron/Foys Advisory Committee

Tamara Tanberg – Lakeside Parks Advisory Committee

Bob Tuman – Flathead County Recreation Supervisor

Linda Tutvedt - Friends of Foys/Herron Advisory Committee

David Landstrom – Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Andy Young – Friends of Foys/Herron Advisory Committee

Proceedings

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. by Chairman Sanders. The January 10, 2011, meeting minutes were approved.

Jim Buechle made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2011, 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.

Recreation Update – Bob Tuman

Bob Tuman distributed two handouts – “Kalispell/Columbia Falls Gymnasium Sport Summary” and “2008 Columbia Falls Youth Basketball Girls – Grades 1 – 6 Questionnaire” – **see Attachments “A” & “B”**. Mr. Tuman reported that adult participation is the largest it has been in his 12 years with the County. The youth participation is holding, with a number of young people traveling for all star

basketball and Flathead Valley Community competition. Parks & Recreation is fighting for time at School District 5 gymnasiums. With custodial cutbacks at schools the recreation staff is required to spend time prepping and cleaning up the gyms, including shoveling snow. Considering the economy and the gym situation, the programs are holding their own. Co-rec softball is the biggest growing sport.

Ray Sanders questioned how the fee increase is being received by the players. Tuman responded that the players are adjusting their own pocketbooks with business donations being cut back.

Superintendent Fisher commented that the Board could determine to spend all of the Cash-In-Lieu account of any portion thereof. The balance is over 400k, with 485k actually showing Fisher believes that the contribution of \$50,000 for the Lakeside tennis courts and \$62,500 for Herron Park land acquisition has not been deducted from the balance. Fisher believes the balance is approximately 402k; with ½ of the total account spend last year. There are a number of new and ongoing needs – with the desire to do it all but the probability that we can do some.

Bigfork Advisory Committee Cash-in-lieu Requests – Skip Gilmore

Skip Gilmore reported that Carlyle Johnson parking area is inadequate with 2 full size soccer fields, 2 small size soccer fields, and 4 ball diamonds. Mr. Gilmore presented a handout that included schematics of existing and proposed parking and bid proposals for the work from Schellinger, Glacier Paving and LHC – see **Attachment “C”**. Gilmore proposed that an area now covered with trees and open space be converted to additional parking, which would bring the current 50 – 55 spaces to 132 plus parking spaces. Sixty Scotch Pines from 25’ – 35’ tall would need to be removed and disposed of with an estimated cost of \$2500 to \$7500. There would be a French drain & chain to insure 1-way traffic in and out. They would need a couple of volunteers to do the sprinklers. The pricing obtained does not include striping, a barrier fence, irrigation and tree removal, which costs are estimated to be between 2 – 5%. These costs may be offset with a gravel donation.

Superintendent Fisher questioned how the neighbors would feel about tree removal and Gilmore responded that there are two neighbors this would affect and neither one would be unduly concerned. Fisher also questioned if there was any vacant land for sale. Gilmore responded that there is one 5 acre lot, available for approximately 150k. It is located ¼ mile away and it is not flat which would require ground work to fill in the existing hole. Fisher also said that a bigger lot would result in a greater need for sports related activities and this would grow in relationship to the growth of the communities. April, May, and mid-June – July is the greatest use.

Jim Watson suggested that FVCC, who give priority to public works projects, might help by doing the dirt work which they will do for diesel fuel costs. Nine inches of topsoil will need to be removed and 6” put back in to build it up. Ray Sanders commented that the Road Department has assisted the County at Somers Beach and Foy’s Lake. Skip Gilmore suggested the possibility of dumping topsoil on the northeast corner of the property to be used to fill in uneven spots in the field and as needed for future use. This would eliminate the cost of removal. Superintendent Fisher was directed to meet with representatives of FVCC and the Road Department.

Fisher commented that any work in excess of 50k needs to be advertised through Public Notice. Jim Buechle questioned if any sports organizations had been contacted for funding.

Assistant Superintendent Gordon Jewett discussed the possibility of schedule changes to minimize parking concerns and Superintendent Fisher requested that Bob Tuman sit with Skip Gilmore to review scheduling at the park in an effort to minimize parking overload. Ray Sanders commented that buses were a concern due to taking up several parking spaces. The parking overflow here has been on private property and is used about 6 times over a season. The need for a person to be on site directing traffic was discussed.

Herron/Foys Advisory Committee Requests – Liz Makman

Liz Makman presented a schematic “Increase In Herron Park Trail Users Entering TCF Land”, **see Attachment “D”**. She reported that there were 110 people per day in the fall and January saw over 95 average user visits per day and users are thrilled with the grooming. The group is asking for funds to purchase more land at Herron.

Tom Esch recapped the recent purchase of an additional 40 acres for Herron Park from a total of 320 acres available from the Conservation Fund. The County contributed \$62,500 or 22% toward this effort, with RTP and Canyon Ferry Grant funding for 110k. Mr. Esch was proposing this year to purchase an additional 3 phases for a corridor for trails all the way to Blacktail Mountain. If this can be accomplished over one-half of the Conservation Fund Land would be acquired.

The park hosts multiple users from hikers to dog walking, to mountain bikes, cross country skiers, snowshoers and horses. Esch pointed out that Herron is the only County park that accommodates horseback riding. The Park is used year round.

Esch is asking for 200k Cash-In-Lieu dollars. He pointed out that the County has an obligation to be good stewards of the land, for which there is a Biblical parallel. With the County’s 200k and their 300k it could be parlayed into 1 million dollars. It would be growing our money. Mr. Esch asked for a unanimous vote with no dissension. The phased purchase is structured to get to Plum Creek land. The goal is to expand and use to work toward Blacktail & Chase property to the west. The Conservation Fund needs property they can sell – this protects the Conservation Fund prospects in the event it is sold. The property should be contiguous as there are these are trails that are being used now. **See Attachments “E”** – request letter dated February 2, 2011; **“F”** – Phasing Plan Draft 3-12-10; and **“G”** – Funding Sources for Phase 1 Land Purchase, Herron Park Expansion.

Dave Landstrom, the regional manager of Fish Wildlife and Parks located in Kalispell took the floor. Mr. Landstrom has been involved with Foys to Blacktail Trails and Flathead County since the beginning. The Recreational Trails Program has given the highest possible award toward this effort, with approximately \$2 – \$3 available for every \$1 spent stateside. The group has demonstrated organization & leveraging ability of 4 or 5 to 1. They have strong partnerships, elbow grease, and good planning. The benefits to Flathead County are enormous. Mr. Landstrom manages sites surrounding Herron & sees it as a significant County park. Landstrom agrees with The Conservation Fund that the timing is critical and the project has momentum with volunteer partnership, and individual neighbors. Plum Creek and Stoltz are being supportive and there is no controversy regarding this effort. Landstrom reiterated that Fish, Wildlife and Parks are in full support of the request.

Jed Fisher commented that Plum Creek has been very good about public access and also notices land value. He questioned the security once we reach Plum Creek, who is in the real estate business and wants to maximize every dollar for their shareholders.

Jim Watson reported that Plum Creek currently has a 40' easement with constraints regarding what they can do. Once this halfway point is reached there will be momentum for additional funding.

Kila Park – Jeff Hutten

Jeff Hutten introduced himself as the unofficial representative for the proposed Kila Park, located across the street from Kila school. Mr. Hutten indicated that the group has momentum and has raised \$4500 to date. The park vision does not include a lot of infrastructure and his request is in the amount of \$4500 for picnic tables and a gazebo.

The park will interpret the historical and wildlife value of the area. Fish, Wildlife and Parks has been approached regarding a Visitors Services Grant which would provide signs for interpretative trail highlighting. Half of the value of the grant would be leveraged with labor.

One of the main features is a railroad spur which accessed Enterprise Mill and is approximately 5' higher than the surrounding elevation. Jim Watson suggested the group talk with Stoltz Lumber regarding historical information.

Lakeside Advisory Committee Cash-In-Lieu Requests – Tamara Tanberg

Tamara Tanberg reported that last summer was dedicated to construction and now comes the icing on the cake. Tanberg distributed and reviewed Lakesides List of Requests for Flathead County Weeds Parks Meeting – **see Attachment “H”**, along with a copy of the Kompan warranty for playground equipment, and a receipt for purchase of paint. Most of the list can be completed in-house. Item #3 of the request list is paint that is a color match USTA green, and the help of FVCC on item #5 was pointed out. The fall zone beneath the playground equipment needs to be addressed. In addition, a Park sign is needed on the Highway indicating a right-hand turn.

The last item is biggest point of discussion and involves making a system of safe trails throughout Lakeside to connect to the various parks. A new committee has been formed to advise on issues in and around downtown Lakeside, emphasizing pedestrian safety. Currently the Blacktail Road Trail project is in the CTEP evaluation process.

Tamarack Brewery's recent fundraiser raised \$2200 for the maintenance fund, with the goal to get back up to 10K maintenance fund level. Superintendent Fisher requested that any ads need to be addressed with the Board ahead of time.

Middle Forks Parks Advisory Committee Cash-In-Lieu Requests – Dan Fagre

Dan Fagre distributed the Middle Forks Parks Committee Requests which had no dollar amount, **see Attachment “I”**, and commented that Committee affects 4 very small parks. Previously, the committee focused on Belton which was formerly a dump site. Attention was given to safety, and environmental

concerns, with current effort to determine park boundaries. Stabilization of surface soil is needed to avoid erosion.

There was discussion regarding some public scoping to determine action and any development. Park directional signs are important as mostly locals use it now, in addition to signing regarding park rules, such as no bonfires or beer parties. People take ownership when they have a park and signage. Winter activities include sledding for small kids, and picnics in the summer.

Martin City discussion and action is down the road and may include a basketball hoop or tennis court, with the intent to broaden the geographical influence.

Max Edgar discussion was regarding focus on the basic structural design with the first steps now, and later pursuit of developmental ideas.

Staff Cash-In-Lieu Requests – Jed Fisher

Superintendent Fisher reviewed his list of staff requests for total of 226k – **see Attachment “J”**. These requests address complaints, liabilities, and some are repeats year-to-year that have not been addressed with the budget. The County pocket parks have aging playgrounds and playground equipment. By far the biggest cash request is to leave money in the bank for a gymnasium. It is important to provide for maintenance and upkeep, however, these amenities are not income producing and the County Parks & Recreation Department needs to look at long term costs with a view of how to make money to support its needs. We have to figure out a way to take care of the programs because we won't necessarily be able to rely on use of school gyms. We do not want to be in competition with other requests and recognize there are a lot of needs and all are good requests.

Fisher reminded the Board that this Department has existed on the same budget since 1997. In order to be successful 20 years down the road it is important to run the Department as an income producing business. With the slow-down in the economy, Cash-In-Lieu dollars may not be here for many more years to come. We need to focus on something that creates value to give back for requests. Fisher estimates that there could be 10-15-20k net weekends if programs are done right with the right teams, and estimated that it will take 2 million dollars to build a gym. We have accomplished a lot of good things such as Somers Beach, Bitterroot Lake access, Church Slough southeast of Kalispell, Volunteer Park in Lakeside, and Herron Park in Kalispell, but we have created nothing to support them. There is 140 – 150k recreation income potential with employees Bob Tuman and Mike Dyon. With a 400k budget there is 20-30-40k carry-over that we have tried to keep each year.

Fisher stated that he would like to leave some money in the bank for leveraging. There is a lot of liability, and lots of concerns. The Department has spent 3.5 – 4 million in building upgrades. Elise Roberger questioned the use of weed income and Superintendent Fisher indicated that there is no cross-over in departmental budgets.

Foys to Blacktail Trails

Tom Esch stated his request earlier in the meeting.

Pony Club, Hang Tags – Linda Tutvedt

Linda Tutvedt stated that the Flathead Combined Training Association would like to have Pony Club on the 3rd week in June with a donation of \$250.00 which would include the use of Herron Park and Foy's Center.

Regarding the hang tags she is not sure. Tutvedt expressed that this effort needs to be taken up by the Department and all she can do as a citizen is make a donation. It will happen one way or another. They could be printed at the Department, sold here, give it a year to try out.

There was discussion whether to have a sticker or a hang tag. It was generally agreed it is important to post rules and to get them right. Rebecca Farms is willing to leave the hang tags on their counter for people to make a donation.

Gordon Jewett brought up potential conflict between FCTA's and Ideal Equestrian's use of Herron Park. Tutvedt stated that with the rules carefully spelled out there should not be any conflict.

Ms. Tutvedt was assured that money donated for Herron would be applied toward Herron.

Other Business

Jed Fisher discussed one additional Cash-In-Lieu request – that of purchase of Devar Gardner's property adjacent to Little Bitterroot Lake access. Although we requested three appraisals only Ted Dykstra Jr.'s was returned, coming in at 235k, which coincidentally is the same figure that Devar had in mind to ask, saying he only wanted to cover his tax base which is also 235k. There was discussion regarding surplusing this park so it was generally agreed to hold on a decision and wait.

Andy Young stated his support of Foys to Blacktail trails purchase of additional land for Herron Park.

Jim Watson reported that the Department obtained a permit from Plum Creek to groom cross-country ski trails on Plum Creek land, which has been completed. This has been a good partnership.

Watson further reported several meetings have been held with Alex Hogle of the City Planning & Zoning Department to establish parameters for managing trails. A draft of "Resolution, Flathead County Parks and Recreation Board Trails Program Administration" was distributed – **see Attachment "K"**. Several trails have been approved by the Commissioners using the old system and it is anticipated the new procedures will be in place soon. The Trail Plan is now part of the Growth Policy. BJ Grieve of the Planning & Zoning Department has requested language to address specific roles. Mr. Watson requested the Board's approval to work with the Planning and Zoning Department on this document and to answer questions.

Jim Buechle made a motion to allow Jim Watson to work with the Planning and Zoning Department on a draft of the Trails Program Administration document.
Elise Robocker seconded the motion.
All in favor ~ the motion was carried.

Jim Watson indicated that effort was to create the document only and that it would come back to the Board for final approval.

Jed Fisher stated that the Department has received letters of interest summarized on a roster of individuals interested in serving on Advisory Committees, including many current members – see **Attachment “L”**. The goal is to have all terms begin and end at the same time to minimize administrative time and legal ads. Each member’s term would begin on February 1, 2011 and be for three years.

Jim Buechle made a motion to approve the appointment of committee members on the attached “Advisory Committee Roster” Attachment “L” for a period of three years beginning February 1, 2011.

Jim Watson seconded the motion.

All in favor ~ the motion was carried.

It was agreed to hold a Special Meeting of the Weeds, Parks & Recreation Board of Directors on Monday, February 7, 2011, at 9:00 a.m. in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss Cash-In-Lieu appropriations for fiscal year 2011 budget.

Adjourn

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

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

All in favor ~ motion carried.

A Special Meeting of the Weeds & Parks Board of Directors will be held on Monday February 7, 2011, at 9:00 a.m., in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana.

Thereafter, the next regularly scheduled Board meeting will be on Monday, March 7, 2011, at 8:30 a.m., in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana.