

Flathead County Weed/Parks/Recreation
MINUTES
Board of Directors
Meeting Date: September 19, 2011

Members of the Board in attendance:

Jim Watson, Elise Robocker, Jim Buechle, Clyde Fisher, Ray Sanders

Members of the Board not in attendance:

No board members were absent.

Also in attendance:

Jed Fisher, Superintendent; Gordon Jewett, Assistant Superintendent; and Haily Meeker, Clerk

Others Present:

BJ Grieve – Flathead County Planning & Zoning

Sharon Hopkins – Bigfork Advisory Committee

Skip Gilmore – Bigfork Advisory Committee

Evan Carter – Flathead County Weed Department

Liz Mackman – Foy/Herron Advisory Committee

Tamara Tanberg – Lakeside Parks Advisory Committee

Dan Farge – Middle Fork Advisory Committee

Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors, Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation, was held in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana, on September 19th, 2011. The meeting convened at 8:30 AM, Chairman Sanders presiding.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the August 1st, 2011 meetings of the Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation Board of Directors were distributed to the members of the Board and approved.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

CTEP Administration Policy

BJ Grieve of Flathead County Planning & Zoning gave an overview of the updated Community Transportation Enhancement Program Administration Policy. Recently, he approached the commissioners regarding maintenance funding and local match for trail projects. The commissioners stressed the importance of planning. This policy document is intended to complement the Flathead County Trails Plan and provide guidelines specific to privately initiated and sponsored CTEP trail projects administered by Flathead County Planning & Zoning. Non-CTEP trails addressed in the plan using other public, private or combinations of funds are not specifically subject to these policies.

Interested groups must raise 50% of the local match prior to the Commission signing the Project Specific Agreement. An additional 25% must be raised prior to contract signing with the Montana Department of Transportation and the final 25% of the local match must be raised prior to signing a contract with a construction contractor. Jim Buechle raised the question of administrative costs. Mr. Grieve stated that no changes will be made in the administrative process; Alex Hogle of Planning & Zoning will continue to coordinate CTEP.

Superintendent Fisher mentioned that \$26,500 was budgeted this fiscal year to maintain existing trails near schools.

BJ Grieve indicated that the parks board would have a degree of involvement with trail selection. Their review and recommendations will be considered by the Commission, who will make the final decision. He also stated that redistribution of funds may be possible if proposed projects are not ready in time. Limits will be set for funding and all necessary pieces must be in place prior to signing.

Jim Buechle made a motion to endorse the Community Transportation Enhancement Program Administrative Policies (see Attachment A).

Elise Robocker seconded the motion.

Discussion followed regarding engineering costs and the need for all required documentation on an example trail. BJ Grieve brought up the current situation with the short-fall of funding for the Sam Bibler Trail. The community is raising the needed \$8K to finish the project. He stated that this kind of situation would not be possible under this policy. All projects are proposed in phases specifically to prevent overspending.

All in favor ~ the motion was carried.

Update on Church Slough & Discussion of Court Ruling

Superintendent Fisher shared information regarding the recent court injunction. Testimony was given by Jed Fisher, Gordon Jewett, Jim Vashro, Chuck Hunt, Melanie Nelson and Dennis Carver. Mr. Carver claims irreparable harm and destruction of view shed and serenity caused by the development of the boat launch near his home on Church Slough. Judge Curtis ruled to implement a temporary boat size restriction of 16 feet or smaller.

Daily spot checks in the park indicate the use to be relatively low, between 0 and 5 vehicles at any given time. The current width of the launch is 11'3". Carver's attorneys are proposing a width reduction narrowing the ramp down to 6'6". This action would allow unlimited use of jet skis. Launching an actual boat in these conditions would be nearly impossible to accomplish without causing some kind of damage. Mr. Buechle voiced his recollection of the Parks Department specifically following Carver's recommendations. Mr. Fisher stated that Carver's recommendations were continually honored, from excluding a vaulted bathroom to limiting the parking area.

Discussion followed on the general concern of legal action being taken in the future against Flathead County or Montana State for park development and/or improvement. Superintendent Fisher stated that currently no agreement has been made between the attorneys on the launch restriction.

No Name Park – Bitterroot Lake

Superintendent Fisher reported that Marvin Rosenberg would like to see this area improved. Adequate public comment will be essential before any action is taken. Jim Watson would like a site plan drawn for board review.

Gardner's Bitterroot Lake Lot

This item was moved up on the agenda. At the Board Meeting held on August 1, 2011, Davar Gardner offered to sell his property at Little Bitterroot Lake to Flathead County for \$100,000. Mr. Gardner stated he was willing to take \$50,000 now, and the remaining \$50,000 to be paid the following year. At that time, it was discussed that the major benefit of potential purchase would be to have additional parking for Blue Grouse Park, located immediately adjacent to the subject property.

Board members present, Superintendent Jed Fisher and Assistant Superintendent Gordon Jewett visited Mr. Gardner's property located at 665 Lodgepole, Marion, Montana, legal description Lot 017 Blue Grouse Subdivision in S6-T27N-R24W. In addition those present visited with neighbor Rick Marler and another interested neighbor who prefers to remain anonymous.

Drainage concerns are associated with the property that would require an expenditure of funds, and the existing house is a detriment rather than a benefit.

Blue Grouse Park has seen increased use this summer due to the high water level, thus being the only year parking has been a concern. Typically during a two week period in the winter there are 5 – 8 regular daily users.

During the tour, it was pointed out that the County owns 10 acres directly across the road from the subject property. The Board determined that money spent would be better served at existing locations at Bitterroot Lake as opposed to purchase of additional property.

Clyde Fisher motioned to reaffirm the declination of this land purchase.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, and all in favor ~ the motion was carried.

GPS Mapping Update

Evan Carter of the Flathead County Weed District updated the board on the history as well as the current status of the GPS units and software from Electronic Data Solutions and CartoPac (see Attachment B). He reported that the units seem to be adequate; it is the software and servers that are failing. Logging spray reports, mapping infestations, treatments and complaints are the main goals for this weed program. Jim Watson stated that if this technology becomes operational, the probability of securing grant funding for future projects would increase astronomically.

Mr. Carter informed the board that the Mosquito District is running a program called Sentinel and their information is updated nightly through the Flathead County GIS Department. Jim Buechle asked Evan Carter of the possibility of this system being functional with 30 days. Mr. Carter replied that it is possible, but we have been "close" to operational for over one year now.

Jim Watson made a motion for Evan Carter to consult with GIS and IT for recommendations to improve the reporting process and results.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, and all in favor ~ the motion was carried.

Jim Watson offered his personal GPS units to the Flathead County Weed staff to map the herbicide application of weed infestations within Herron Park. State grant funding may be available for this project.

Bigfork Advisory Report

Skip Gilmore asked about the legality of school busses parking on private property. The general thought was, it is allowed unless posted no trespassing. He reported that the sprinklers on the East side of Carlyle Johnson Park are spraying into the road and that a considerable amount of debris was left in the center of the parking lot by Parks Department staff.

Sharon Hopkins reported that Ian MacCallum would like to meet with the committee. Jed Fisher reported that this season, the Parks department has logged 285 working hours into these three parks alone. Salary expenses alone are estimated over \$7K at this point in the season. Mrs. Hopkins requested an email of this information as well as a list of current users of Aero Lane, Potoczny and Carlyle Johnson. Sharon Hopkins inquired about the status of the Sliter Park Lease. Mr. Fisher indicated the lease was renewed this year.

Foys/Herron Advisory Report

Liz Mackman thanked the Parks Department for the cleanliness and good work provided at Foy's Lake. The carpet installed on the dock has alleviated their safety concerns. Ms. Mackman asked about the plans for a footpath access to the water. The current layout of the park accompanied by the steep terrain and continued erosion makes it difficult for some to access the beach. Superintendent Fisher indicated that there are no plans currently implemented to improve this park. Alison of Flathead County Planning & Zoning will develop a site plan when time allows. As soon as this is accomplished, it will be submitted to the board for approval.

Foys to Blacktail Trails Report

Liz Mackman informed the board that volunteers offered their time to map weed sites. Two more volunteer days are scheduled for September 24th and October 1st. Jim Watson mentioned that the final environmental assessment will be out in two weeks. There will be a 30 day comment period. An updated trail map is available. Ms. Mackman offered to provide trail tours to any interested board or staff members. It is anticipated that by the end of October, FTBT will be closing on an additional 60 acres to add to Herron Park.

Lakeside Advisory Report

Tamara Tanberg provided a certificate of liability insurance for Ben Williams Tennis Courts and minutes from their July committee meeting (see Attachment C). Roy Peterson of the Montana Department of Transportation plans to put in a flashing beacon at intersection of Highway 93 and Adams Street. Jed Fisher indicated that the power to said beacon could be hooked to the existing meter at Volunteer Park. Jim Watson suggested the possibility of a Round Up For Safety grant. Mrs. Tanberg stated that a trash removal schedule will be implemented by the Lakeside Advisory Committee next summer. She also reported that there was a transient in Ben Williams Park. Gordon Jewett spoke with the individual and she has not been seen again. Mrs. Tanberg asked Mr. Fisher about the status of their Memorandum of Understanding. He indicated that Michele Haarr is working on it with County Attorney, Peter Steele.

Middle Forks Advisory Committee

Dan Farge asked about a fifth member. They would like to have an alternate on their committee. Mr. Farge reported they will be fixing five fence boards that were knocked down in Belton Stage Park. During the summer, an active target practice group with firearms was present in Belton Stage Park. Elk have also been seen passing through. Park rules and no hunting signs have been requested. He asked about the necessary duration of the soil barriers. Gordon Jewett stated that Dave Prunty from the Flathead County Road & Bridge Department indicated that these barriers will need to stay in place for a very long time, if not indefinitely. Mr. Jewett also stated that grating and gravel work will take place at Max Edgar Park this fall. Jim Watson asked about the possibility of the raft tour companies contributing a donation or paying a user fee.

Cost Share Program for Salt Cedar

Superintendent Fisher briefed the board on numerous salt cedar sightings. Many have been removed and a few of the landowners are very upset. Mr. Fisher felt that it would be fair to provide these people with a replacement tree. The idea is a 50/50 cost share program between the Flathead County Weed District and the Flathead Conservation District with \$100 limit. The board expressed their support of this program and the need to treat all cases equally.

Park Fees for non-profit users

Discussion began regarding park use impact to the department. The maintenance costs are the same regardless of the origin of the group. Jim Buechle suggested that a 10% deduction be implemented to non-profit groups instead of the current 50% deduction.

Jim Watson made a motion to implement a 10% deduction to non-profit groups and waive fees to organizations with an active memorandum of understanding with the Flathead County Parks Department.

Elise Robocker seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, and all in favor ~ the motion was carried.

Horace Sanders Memorial Park MOU

A memorandum of understanding was distributed (see Attachment D) describing the responsibilities of each department involved. The Montana Department of Transportation will own the land, modify the existing fence and install a vaulted toilet. The Flathead County Parks and Recreation Department will maintain the grounds and enforce park rules. Rails to Trails will perform light maintenance and monitor the site. Ray Sanders stated that the Montana Department of Transportation has staff to create a site plan. Jim Watson mentioned that a road to the vaulted toilet should be considered in the site plan for maintenance purposes.

Elise Robocker made a motion to continue to refine an agreement and MOU with the Montana Department of Transportation.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, and all in favor ~ the motion was carried.

Capital Outlay Improvement Expenditures

Superintendent Fisher indicated that it will cost \$3,500 to install a fence between Trevor Shaffer's Lakeside Marina property and the County's Bierney Creek launch property.

Clyde Fisher motioned to install the fence for an estimated cost of \$3,500.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, and all in favor ~ the motion was carried.

Conrad Complex Pump/Well – Superintendent Fisher reported on the status of the water system situation at the Conrad Complex. The pump failed and the entire system had to be replaced. This will have to be paid for out of cash reserves as it was unexpected and not budgeted for. It will bring the parks cash reserves balance down from approximately \$192K to \$152K. Clyde Fisher inquired about the high price. It was explained that a variable speed system is now in place and this is a long term solution.

Other Business

Shelving assembly is needed in the records preservation building. Russell Tindale and Willis Weseman of Flathead County Weed & Parks Department have offered their services to complete this project as soon their regular season comes to an end. These wages will be paid from the Flathead County Clerk & Recorder's budget.

Jim Buechle motioned to approve temporary employment extensions for Russell Tindale and Willis Weseman to be paid by the Flathead County Clerk & Recorder.

Elise Robocker seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, and all in favor ~ the motion was carried.

Curly Leaf Pondweed has been discovered in Church, Egan and Fennon sloughs as well as Bigfork Harbor and Kerr Dam. Bigfork Harbor is in need of some kind of eradication. Superintendent Fisher suggested that it should be pulled to avoid chemical application in the harbor. Mr. Fisher also introduced the idea of implanting an aquatic weed eradication program within the Flathead County Weed District. The presence of Yellow Flag Iris, Flowering Rush, Giant Hogweed, Salt Cedar and now Curly Leaf Pondweed in Flathead County could easily keep at least one person busy all season. Grant funds may be sought to fund an additional employee for this purpose.

Clyde Fisher made a motion to pursue an aquatic weed division.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, and all in favor ~ the motion was carried.

The Flathead County Weed District was awarded grant funds this season to target Tansy Ragwort. A lot of work has been performed on Plum Creek land and progress is substantial. Kyle Dixon and Nikolas Van Rinsum were brought on through Labor Contractors and did an excellent job. Superintendent Fisher expressed his desire to continue this project with an aggressive approach.

Jim Buechle motioned to apply for Noxious Weed Trust Fund grant support to continue to target Tansy Ragwort next season.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

There being no discussion, and all in favor ~ the motion was carried.

Jim Watson shared a Rails-To-Trails map produced by volunteers and sponsors of the project.

Adjourn

Clyde Fisher made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:02 a.m.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion

There being no discussion, and all in favor ~ the motion was carried.

The time and place of the next regular meeting is Monday, October 3rd, 2011 at 8:30 AM in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana.