

Flathead County Weed/Parks/Recreation
MINUTES
Board of Directors
Meeting Date: April 2, 2012

Members of the Board in attendance:

Jim Buechle, Clyde Fisher, Elise Robocker, Ray Sanders, Pete Woll

Members of the Board not in attendance:

All board members were present.

Also in attendance:

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

Others Present:

Fred Adkins – NW Rails to Trails
Jennifer Drew – Lakeside Advisory Committee
Cliff Kipp – Foy's to Blacktail Trails
Kate McMahon – Applied Communications
Helen Pilling – Kila Resident
Tamara Tanberg – Lakeside Advisory Committee
Bob Tuman – Flathead County Recreation Department

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 April 2, 2012. The meeting convened at 8:32AM, Chairman Sanders presiding.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the March 5, 2012 meeting of the Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation Board of Directors were distributed to the members of the Board.

Jim Buechle made a motion to approve the March 5, 2012 minutes.

Pete Woll seconded the motion.

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

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Whitefish Legacy Lands Update – Kate McMahon, Applied Communications

Kate McMahon introduced herself and indicated she was under contract with the City of Whitefish in their effort to promote trails. She updated the Board regarding the progress on various trail efforts.

There is a new trail from Lion Mountain to Beaver Lake which is now 19 miles, with 5 additional miles to be added this summer. The trail was built through Department of Natural Resources and Conservation through a

land use license and a permanent easement is being sought. Conversion to a public recreation easement allows for a right to build trails & protect existing trails.

Currently Spencer Lake has no sanctioned trails, however, eventually a trail system is anticipated which will meet standards.

There is a private transaction in process involving a land swap. The conservation easement wants funds generated from this transaction to relate to trails.

It is hoped that these efforts will be completed with the current administration. Whitefish Legacy Partners is involved as a non-profit group.

Foys to Blacktail Trails Report – 2012 RTP Grant

Due to time constraints of the presenter, this topic was moved up in the agenda. Mr. Cliff Kipp reported on Montana Conservation Corps activities as they relate to the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant. Herron Park trail maintenance and minor construction will occur this year. It was recognized that better trail signing and an overall signing plan is needed which will meet Forest Service standards. These will be reviewed with the Board. Mr. Kipp was hopeful that the County Parks Department would contribute to this effort.

Kipp reviewed upcoming events at Herron – The Herron Hustle is the first weekend in May and National Trails Day is on June 2nd.

Assistant Superintendent Gordon Jewett indicated that exterior boundaries where the trail leaves the park will be posted. The Road Department will supply a directional sign to Herron Park.

There was discussion regarding weeds that were mapped and pinned by the Conservation Corps last spring which have been treated by the Weed District.

Superintendent Jed Fisher reported that the Spartan Race is coming to town next year and County Commissioner Mike Pence has asked us to work with this group for a venue. It is anticipated this event will bring thousands of people and substantial income to the Flathead Valley.

Rails to Trails – Sharing Responsibility for Mowing, Plowing & Weed Control – Helen Pilling

Helen Pilling and Fred Adkins appeared on behalf of a volunteer group in Kila that performs trail maintenance. Ms. Pilling reviewed ongoing needs relative to sweeping, snow removal and weed control. Currently the group arranges for sweeping of only 2 areas twice per year; however there are lots of driveways that cross the trail and need to be swept. Over the past few years the group has hired a private party to manage weed control on both sides of the trails with some members performing hand spraying. Some of the ongoing concerns are trash pick-up, fallen trees, and gravel on lots in parking areas. The Boy Scouts have helped and the Arbor Day Foundation will be planting trees this year.

The group is continuing to write grants for maintenance funds, resealing, signing, building staging areas, and managing vandalism. They do what they can, however the needs are great and they are asking for the County to make an ongoing contribution to help with maintenance costs.

Superintendent Fisher explained that the Parks Department is responsible for maintenance for ½ mile on either side of the schools. The request of the Kila volunteer group is unfunded and not in the budget dollars. In addition, any assistance given would set a precedent for other trail maintenance requests. Mr. Fisher indicated

the most efficient and effective way of getting things done is through volunteer organizations. All volunteers need to be trained and all work needs to be hand-work only without the use of equipment or power tools.

Ms. Pilling will check with the Road Department for assistance with sweeping. Superintendent Fisher indicated that there are ongoing costs associated with trails and money should be placed in trust as the trails are built.

Ray Sanders explained that the Parks and Recreation Department supports the trails which traditionally receive construction funds, however no maintenance funds are considered or allocated. Jim Buechle indicated that the County could help with letters of support. Elise Robocker asked if the Weed District could help with weeds, however, it was clarified that weed management occurs in County Right-of-Ways.

The importance of establishing good cover with native plants was discussed. The Weed District avoids using sterilant for weed control because it leaches into the ground.

Lakeside Advisory Report

Several members met with the local Chamber of Commerce to discuss the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) project in Lakeside and remind them of what is available in Lakeside as people pass through.

Volunteer Park - The Committee is working on a trash volunteer list to keep Volunteer Park clean. Training will occur and a log with dates & times will be kept. A flashing beacon will be installed at the Adams Street crossing by late spring.

Ben Williams Park – The Lakeside Volunteer Fire Department will be on location soon to hose off the tennis courts. Jennifer Drew reported that 4 weeks of Quick Start tennis lessons will take place in June. There were 14 participants in this program last June.

Park User Fees

Superintendent Jed Fisher distributed a letter from Sandy Carlson, Finance Director, regarding park user fees – see **Attachment A**. Fisher stated that the County incurs costs no matter who uses the park. Bob Tuman of the Recreation Department expressed a concern that if the schools or the City of Kalispell Parks & Recreation Department are charged a user fee, they will begin charging the County Parks & Recreation Department for use of the school gyms and other services. It was suggested that a Memorandum of Understanding be written by the County Attorney's office, so that there is a written agreement in place. Fisher reminded the Board that we have taken on 5 new parks with no new dollars. There is continuing maintenance and vandalism to manage. The department is covering costs and not making a profit on park rentals.

Elise Robocker made a motion to attach the March 12, 2012 correspondence from Finance Director Sandy Carlson to the Parks Master Plan and to adhere to the established fee schedule for all park users. Pete Woll seconded the motion.

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

No Wake Zone – Church Slough

Superintendent Jed Fisher recommended that the Board approve circulation of a petition to support a no wake zone at Church Slough. The authority to adopt and enforce this zone rests with Fish, Wildlife & Parks and it would be consistent with Fennon Slough.

Elise Robocker made a motion to support a no-wake zone on Church Slough.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

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

Bigfork Advisory Committee

There was no one present from Bigfork Advisory Committee.

Superintendent Jed Fisher stated that Mr. Bob Keenan is responsible for a trust account and committed 15K toward restroom improvements at Sliter Park. The bids will be kept local. Upon investigation the anticipated cost to complete improvements was 23K, and Mr. Keenan agreed to this amount. There will be new toilets, fixture, electrical, and T-111 siding on the exterior.

Foys/Herron Advisory Report

There was no one present from Foys/Herron Advisory Committee.

Middle Forks Advisory Committee

There was no one present from Middle Forks Advisory Committee.

Superintendent Fisher reported that park clean-up will occur in the spring. All staff are back as of this date.

Horace Sanders Park Update

Jim Watson and Jim Lynch are continuing to work on establishing this park in honor of Horace Sanders. There is ongoing discussion regarding who will provide what.

Discussion Regarding Curlyleaf Pondweed and Yellowflag Iris

Superintendent Jed Fisher reported that Board Chairman Ray Sanders, board member Pete Woll, and Commissioner Pam Holmquist met to discuss Curlyleaf Pondweed. There was no representation from the Department of Natural Resource Conservation or from the Department of Agriculture.

Neither Commissioner Dale Lauman nor Pam Holmquist want Flathead County to be responsible for issuing a contract for any aquatic weeds in Montana waters. County Attorneys Peter Steele and Tara Fugina are working diligently to address this concern. There are questions of ownership of the actual weed, the fish, the water, the ground below the water, and what entity holds responsibility for each. The concern may ultimately come before the District Court Judge for direction.

The Weed Management Plan needs to be updated and will be reviewed by the Board and the County attorneys.

Yellowflag Iris has been surveyed and mapped using grant funds. To date, there has been no treatment.

Pete Woll made a motion to rescind the motion passed at the March 5, 2012 meeting which stated “to proceed with contracting Mountain Valley Plant Management to perform remediation work for Yellowflag Iris, in an amount not to exceed \$4,900”.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion.

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

Superintendent Fisher suggested to the Board that the Weed District follow the Commissioner's lead and suspend any activity planned for management of aquatic weeds. Mr. Fisher further indicated that the Weed District would continue to provide weed education and perform survey work if grant funds are received.

Elise Robocker made a motion to take the matter of managing aquatic weeds under advisement with no action until the Weed District receives the advice of the County Attorneys and Commissioners.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion.

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

Other Business

Robin Street Pond Trail Work – Superintendent Jed Fisher stated that this project is being managed by Fish, Wildlife and Parks. This project is not in the budget and is therefore not an appropriate expenditure for the Parks & Recreation Department; however the Department would be willing to endorse Flathead Electric's "Round Up For Safety" funding.

Conrad Complex Lease – Jim Buechle encouraged Superintendent Jed Fisher to begin discussion regarding the Conrad Complex lease renewal.

Recreation Updates

Testing for Softball Bats – Recreation Director Bob Tuman reported and he and District 1 Amateur Softball Association (ASA) Commissioner Nicole Brown met with the County Attorneys regarding putting strong policies in place for testing softball bats. There have been cases of people modifying bats to obtain longer distances in their hits, ranging from 85 miles per hour, without alteration, to 185 miles per hour after modification. Bats are being tested at the State Tournaments and the Board endorsed purchase of a bat testing machine for the Recreation Department. Both Ms. Brown and Mr. Tuman are working with the ASA to revise all softball rules. Mr. Tuman will collect more information and report to the Board.

Adult Kickball – Mr. Tuman reported that he is working with the City of Kalispell on a new league for Adult Kickball. It is anticipated that the City and the County will work together on this and use the Conrad Complex.

Promotions – Over the next year Qdoba restaurant is participating in several promotions directly benefiting the Recreation Department such as signing in the gym and on the field, water bottles, carry bags, tee-shirts and swipe cards for discount foods. Their contributions are appreciated.

Volunteering – Mr. Tuman expressed his understanding for a tight budget and using volunteers to help keep the costs down. He would like half of his volleyball time to count as volunteer hours. Although the Board was unable to accommodate his request, they did consider payment of rotary fees in the amount of \$800 to \$1,000 per year. This will be discussed with the Finance Department.

There was no other business.

Adjourn

Jim Buechle made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:53AM.

Clyde Fisher 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, May 7, 2012 at 8:30 AM in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana.

**FLATHEAD COUNTY FINANCE DEPARTMENT**

800 South Main - Kalispell, Montana 59901

Phone (406) 758-5539

Fax (406) 758-5840



March 12, 2012

Jed Fisher
Parks Department
Flathead County

Dear Jed,

After our discussions regarding usage of our park facilities, I have a few comments I would like to make from a financial perspective.

- 1) I strongly recommend your park board consider adopting a very clear policy on what groups/agencies are required to pay for rental and who is considered an exception.
 - a. If there are exceptions, I would recommend that a memorandum of understanding be in place to eliminate any confusion.

Without a clear policy, staff is forced to interpret the Boards intent and the County becomes vulnerable to challenges of that interpretation. Keep in mind not all non-profit groups have the general "public" interest in mind. (Some can be political, religious, social etc...)

- 2) I would like to encourage the board to consider charging a fee for all groups using the park facilities.
 - a. When a group/agency rents park facilities, there are incremental costs incurred by the County. These costs include extra trash pickup, may require additional mowing outside the regular schedule to ensure good presentation, additional pumping of facilities, employee costs to lock/unlock gates, wear and tear or damage on the facilities as well as administrative costs involved in securing a permit.
 - b. There are certain fixed costs related to the park that are a part of maintaining the park, despite whether the facilities are used. Standard mowing schedule, regular trash pickup, standard pumping schedule etc... These are considered fixed costs and generally paid by the tax dollars collected (public funds). The basic use of the park requiring no "extra" effort from the staff is considered a "public" use of the park and is appropriately supported by tax dollars.

When we rent the park, the permit fees collected should cover the cost of these incremental costs. I would consider this type of use of the park "private" based on the interest of the non-profit agency. (They are the ones benefitting from the incremental costs incurred.)

Ultimately the decision is up to your board. I would like them to take my comments under consideration during their discussions. If you or your board members have further questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandy Carlson".

Sandy Carlson, Finance Director
Flathead County
(406) 758-5539
Scarlson@flathead.mt.gov