

**Flathead County Weed/Parks & Recreation
Board Meeting
311 FFA Drive – Kalispell MT 59901
Conference Room**

**Revised Agenda
Monday, March 4, 2019
8:30 AM**

- Call to Order
- Approve Previous Minutes
- Public Comment
- West Valley Public Bird Viewing Area Update – Laura Katzman
- Budget Review
- Parks & Recreation Department Report
 - Request for Somers Park/Playground
 - Trails Plan Update – Thank You Letter
 - Discussion of Letter Received Regarding PATHS
 - Discussion Regarding Advisory Committees
 - Survey 2 Many Lakes Properties
 - Donation for School District 5
- Weed Department Report
- Election of Board Officers
- Other Business
- Matters of the Board
- Adjourn

Flathead County Weed/Parks/Recreation

MINUTES

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Meeting Date: March 4, 2019

Members of the Board in attendance:

Jim Buechle, Clyde Fisher, Samuel Harworth, Jessica Treweek, Pete Woll

Members of the Board not in attendance:

All members of the Board were present.

Also in attendance:

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

Others Present:

Val Parsons – Gateway to Glacier Trails

Ryan Hunter – Flathead Land Trust

Laura Katzman – Flathead Land Trust

Richard Lauer – Foys to Blacktail Trails

Sarah Dakin – Foys to Blacktail Trails

Call to Order

A 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 March 4, 2019. The meeting convened at 8:35AM, President Woll presiding.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the February 11, 2019, meeting of the Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation Board of Directors were distributed to the members of the Board.

Jim Buechle moved to approve the February 11, 2019 Board minutes.

Jessica Treweek seconded the motion.

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

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

West Valley Public Bird Viewing Area Update – Laura Katzman

Laura Katzman, Flathead Land Trust, was before the Board approximately 3 years ago for assistance with development of a bird viewing area in Kalispell. That project has been completed, has worked out well, and is used by over 150 species of birds. It is unique because it runs through private property with a perpetual easement on the land. This conservation project was constructed and is administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Among those who participated in the construction were Flathead Valley Community College, Schellinger Gravel, Flathead Electric Coop, and small grants. A slide presentation followed.

Laura gave a summary of some of Flathead Land Trust's projects and conserved lands. They have 60 conservation easements that protect approximately 11,000 acres of ground. Laura hopes to work with Flathead County in the future to help develop outdoor recreation opportunities and/or on any needed projects.

Laura asked if any County project needed their help. As a non-profit, they are a resource and they can assist with funding and help write grants. Jed stated that Jerry Lyford has approximately 35 acres by the airport that

includes a fishing pond making it another excellent area for bird viewing. The only concern is that it crosses the railroad tracks, which limits ingress and egress. There is a lot of potential for creative ways to enjoy outdoor opportunities.

Budget Review

This topic was moved to the end of the agenda.

Parks & Recreation Department Report

◦ Request for Somers Park/Playground

Jed reviewed the request from Ansley Ford to raise funds and install playground equipment in Somers. Generally, areas that support family oriented activities cut down on vandalism. Legal can weigh in on boundary lines and whether the property is appropriate for a playground. This project is on hold for the time being due to roadblocks between the County attorney and private landowners.

◦ Trails Plan Update Thank You Letter

Jessica Treweek reviewed the PATHS plan. She likes it and thinks it's a good start; however, she is concerned with the safety aspect of it. There is nothing in the plan that addresses easements and how wide trails will be relative to safety. She contacted several fire service managers in the County and reviewed their concerns about emergency access. Fire services, emergency services, and trail sponsors need to work together for the benefit of citizens and visitors. She reported that Craig Williams, the Fire Chief in Evergreen, would like to see easements along trails, which may be difficult. South Kalispell Fire Chief Chris Yerkes also has easement concerns in the event of a medical emergency. The Smith Valley Fire Chief's complaints were about maintenance on the trails, especially during winter. Easements that exist are covered with snow and there is no place to park along the highway. Jessica stated that before we build miles and miles of new trails, we need to look at the existing system and see how to improve it. Whitefish trails use a mapping system and has wooden posts that are numbered so that every emergency service in Whitefish District can access it. They have a 6th wheeler that is used for emergency services.

Spokane and Coeur' d'Alene were contacted as well. There is potentially more cost to maintain trails there due to paved access. Jessica suggested a field trip to Centennial Park in Spokane to see how two states came together to create a National Trail. The Plan update needs to be done right and before we move further on it we need to look at how others are doing their trail systems. Designation as a State Park would open it up to National Funding.

Jed stated that Paul MacKenzie of Stoltze Land and Lumber wrote a letter indicating that they are not happy about the County trail map indicating 'proposed trails' that cross Stoltze property. Major landowners need to be a part of the conversation for what is being proposed on their properties.

Richard Lauer said many of the trails came from old material and a review of the entire trail database is needed. Ryan Hunter clarified that these trails are not easements, but are "proposed" trails. The current Trails Plan update group used the trail maps that exist in the current plan. There were two public meetings and the maps were there for review and comment. Sarah Dakin stated that the group was not aware that the existing map was not approved.

Pete Woll spoke with Paul MacKenzie about his concerns. In 2010 there was different management at Stoltze so this was new information to Paul.

Jessica said to amend the current plan to address 'proposed trail' concerns, and hold on the current plan.

Val Parsons stated that the Gateway to Glacier trail is very accessible. They are not maintained in the winter. Jessica responded that it wasn't snow but fire that was a concern. Val is happy that this is coming to a head and

it has been a long, long wait for her. Maintenance is a big problem and she is happy that the Board is enthused about it. She is very hopeful that we are finally looking at what we all signed onto during the 90's, but at that time there was no money and no help. The County, trail groups, and grants all need to work together. We need to plan for the future and it will take a lot of cooperation from a lot of agencies. Val stated that GTGT could sit down and go through any numbers and/or costs in question.

Ryan Hunter stated that the new plan is very similar to the 2010 plan, with some tweaks, changes and improvements, but saying the same thing more efficiently. If we fall back on 2010 plan a lot of outdated stuff is still there. It is great to hear about safety concerns. The PATHS2 group can discuss this. This plan is a macro-view plan for the County and individual groups can approach the County with their particular details and requirements.

The Trails Plan Update group is eager to conclude this Plan Update and asked for clarity from the Board. The group will work to address the concerns in the plan and make changes as requested. Jim Buechle still does not have enough information regarding the statistics in the Plan Update, for example, Whitefish and Helena numbers.

Jed stated that Flathead County already has a liability with a 360K estimate for the switchback issue on Whitefish Stage; 60K + for Gateway to Glacier Trails; and also for maintenance of Rails to Trails for overlay and chip seal work estimated at 15K per mile. He would like to see this topic come to a vote. The County has issues that need to be cleaned up before we move forward.

Richard Lauer stated that the Plan Update does not cover that level of detail and it is simply a framework. The real issue is once there is a Plan there is more opportunity for fundraising. The County can take the numbers out if they are troublesome.

Ryan stated that Chapter 3 of the Plan Update lays out financing with options used by other communities. It is not PATHS job or duty to lay out how trails will be financed. Does Chapter 3 need to be revised? Pete responded that there will be a meeting to review the issues with County Departments that are most affected – Planning & Zoning, Legal, Parks & Recreation, the Commissioners, and others.

A letter was drafted and passed to the Board thanking the group for their efforts.

Jessica Treweek moved to send a thank you letter to the PATHS2/Trails Plan Update group.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion

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

◦ **Discussion Regarding Advisory Committees**

The question came up whether the Weed/Parks Board had the right to appoint committees. The By-Laws state that the Board can create committees. Legal has been asked to clarify.

◦ **Survey 2 Many Lakes Properties**

Gordie stated that Randy Sundberg, President of the Many Lakes Homowners' Association believes there is encroachment at East Bass Lake Park and one other park. Because the boundary lines are not visible, a determination and enforcement cannot be accomplished. The Department will need to have these properties surveyed to locate corner pins in order to determine if there is encroachment; and, if this is the case, a cease and desist letter will be sent. Surveys run approximately \$1500 each.

Jim Buechle moved to have surveys done for the two park properties with encroachment concerns.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

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

◦ **Donation for School District 5**

Jed informed the Board that Finance said a donation from cash-in-lieu to the school district is an inappropriate use of those funds, and he asked the Board to review the budget for suggestions of how to slice and dice money to come up with the 80K donation that the Board previously approved. He further reported that Finance stated that PELT dollars may be used and Jed asked the Board to be supportive of using 80K of PELT money for this purpose.

Jim Buechle moved to use existing PELT funds to donate \$80,000 to School District 5.

Jessica Treweek seconded the motion.

Discussion was held about the potential for a gym. Jed did not believe it could be funded without voter's input and believes it is more important to provide continuing recreation programs that can be held in the School District gyms.

There being no further discussion, an all in favor – motion carried.

Budget Review

Jed briefly reviewed Department budgets and stated that it is important to note that budgets are separate, in spite of being a merged department. There are cost savings such as administrative help or some equipment that are used by more than one Department. Weeds is a State-mandated service, with a mill levy that accounts for .5 million, in addition to the 150K for contract work. The Department performs work for a variety of agencies including Bonneville Power Administration, Glacier National Park, and Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Capital improvement projects account for 50 – 70K per year. There are 4-8 month seasonal employees – most return each year, at the starting rate of \$14.80 per hour. The Department endorses diversification of weed control such as bio-control, public education, chemicals, roadside mowing, and revegetation.

Park & Recreation has a 650K budget and receives recreational program and park rental income of 130 – 140K per year. Jed believes completely that it is imperative to maintain a good relationship with the school district for continuing use of their gyms for County recreational programs. There are many different needs, for example, there are 79 County parks but the Department has funding to take care of approximately 35 of them. Liabilities exist, including dead and dying trees and handicapped access issues. In the past, some parks have been surplus and sold; however, the current Commission does not believe in selling & surplus any County land. In 10-15 years if we don't create some funding mechanism for maintenance, safety, handicapped, etc, the Department won't keep afloat. We need to be creative in how we bring in money. There is a huge recreation market that can help pay for so many needs of the Department. This matter either needs to go to the voters or another way needs to be figured out.

Jessica suggested that the County lease or buy the old Herberger's location in the Kalispell mall, or a section of the mall for a gym. It is well situated, adjacent to the trails system, with plenty of parking, food, restrooms, and a hotel. Revenue could slowly be increased. Jed indicated that the County generally does not lease buildings. Also, the roof height needs to be 19' for minimum clearance and would need to be raised.

Both Jessica and Sam endorsed putting trails and the gym under one umbrella if it goes to a vote. If enough segments are brought in, there is diversity and that can hold some weight. The soccer club is looking to buy property. The City should be a partner in it as well. Something needs to be in it for the working class person so they can see the benefit.

Jessica suggested that we check in with Laura Katzman, Flathead Land Trust regarding needed projects in Many Lakes.

Weed Department Report

The Weed Agreement for the City of Kalispell was briefly discussed. The County needs to be protected in the event of a slow season start due to inclement weather.

Election of Board Officers

Jim Buechle moved to keep existing President Pete Woll in office.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

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

Clyde Fisher moved to have Jim Buechle be Vice-President.

Jessica Treweek seconded the motion.

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

Other Business

There was no other business.

Matters of the Board

There were no matters of the Board.

Adjourn

Jessica Treweek moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:30AM.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

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

The time and place of the next meeting is **Monday, April 1, 2019** at 8:30AM in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana.

Documents Submitted to the Board

West Valley Wetlands Conservation Easements & Bird Viewing Area Update

Correspondence from F. H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Company, dated February 19, 2019

Adopted Budget FY10 – Weeds, Parks & Recreation, Buildings

Approved:



Pete Woll, Board President



Date