

Flathead County Weed/Parks/Recreation

MINUTES

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Meeting Date: June 29, 2020

Members of the Board in attendance:

Jim Buechle, Clyde Fisher, Lori Moran, Jessica Treweek, Pete Woll

Members of the Board not in attendance:

All Board members were present.

Also in attendance:

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

Others Present:

Amanda Davey – Flathead County Recreational Program Manager

Gabe Dillon – 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 June 29, 2020. The meeting convened at 8:30 AM, President Woll presiding.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the March 2, 2020, 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 March 2, 2020 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.

Parks & Recreation

• **Foys to Blacktail Trails Report – Gabe Dillon**

Twenty-one people participated in National Trails Day on June 6th at Herron Park. Seventeen bags of houndstongue were removed from the meadow and additional brush work was accomplished on the Notch Trail. On June 13th – 14th the first weed spraying was completed by licensed applicators, who covered about 6 trail miles in 2 days, and the final 3 miles will be sprayed on July 9th. An estimated 17 acres of spotted knapweed infestation exists on the property formerly owned by Weyerhaeuser (now owned by Southern Pines Plantations). American Forestry Management is the company that handles their forestry interests. FTBT received permission to spray a 60' corridor versus a current 15' corridor, in an attempt to minimize the spread of the weeds.

Correction

Gabe expressed his appreciation to Jed and Gordie for working with FTBT on the Herron Park project. The work started last week and covered 1.5 miles of the 2-mile Notch Trail, and the remainder of the work will be completed today. The total project is estimated to take 18 – 21 days. Recreational Equipment Incorporated & Applied Materials helped with the funding.

Jed stated that FTBT folks have done amazing work in lining up funding and trying to keep up with maintenance using volunteer effort. Gabe said that a significant amount of funding was used to expand Herron Park's original 160 acres by 320 acres, with an estimated 2.25 million dollars value given to the County. It was acknowledged that this brought increased maintenance costs. Kiosk construction at Herron was accomplished by donations from a lot of organizations – several that gave at least 25K each. FTBT applied for an RTP grant but was declined, ostensibly due to a lack of planning. The Department needs a Trail Coordinator. Herron trails are 5 years old.

Jed stated that the Parks Department will need to consider expanding the budget for trail work in order to keep up with the demands. He gave a big thank you to FTBT for their work, recognizing the importance of it in the greater scheme of the County, where law enforcement, roads, and health are priorities.

The group formerly known as PATHS2 is now called Flathead Trails Association, and is leaning more toward dirt trails. Jed said that trail maintenance has gone way beyond what anyone can afford.

- **Department Report**

Jed reported that Department staff is struggling to keep up with the work. Many trees are still down due to the storm last month and a section of the Department building roof was peeled back as a result of that storm. Continuing recent rains have made it difficult to mow and have flooded trails. There are many liabilities, and with a lack of full staffing we are doing the best we can with the limitations that we have.

Park bathrooms that were locked due to COVID-19 have now been opened, however, dock installation is held back at Foys Lake due to social distancing concerns. There has been some vandalism to deal with as well.

- **Discussion of Sports Events and COVID-19**

Times are different and the Department is down in income. Initially, it did not appear that the Recreation Department was going to have a sports season, however there is a plan to have t-ball in August. Income this year may barely break 85K, down from 150K in a typical year. A recent softball tournament resulted in a lot of overhead in maintenance time with extra participation from staff.

A recent private tournament at the Conrad Complex was charged the usual fee of \$1500 to prep the fields, in addition to extra money for championship games, however, \$3200 was supplemented due to weather and staff setbacks. The permit holder's income for this event was 11K for 36 teams.

Jed would like to see softball expanded to 108 teams, the former maker for the Department. He wants to work with the Board and the County Attorney to put the responsibility on the Permit holder for all field preparation, with a weather clause included in the contract. The losses incurred from the recent tournament cannot continue to happen. Fees need to increase now, and Jed is looking at tripling daily fees plus an hourly fee for anything over basic preparation. This particular year has brought to a head serious loss. The Conrad Complex lease agreement costs the Department 18K annually.

A Babe Ruth softball event in Missoula scheduled for July was cancelled and the group wants to rent the Conrad Complex fields. Lori Moran suggested that out-of-County groups have an increased rate. Jed suggested that the Complex be sublet to adult sports groups. Kidsports does not rent fields and is not for adult recreation.

- **Many Lakes – Surplus Properties**

Commissioner Holmquist remains adamantly against surplus/selling any Many Lakes parks, however, the other two commissioners are in favor. The Department is not prepared to deal with this at this point.

- **Robert Peccia & Associates Contract – Trails Evaluation**

Robert Peccia & Associates comes highly recommended by the Road Department, who has used them several times. There is a budget of \$28,300 within the trails maintenance plan to hire a trails maintenance contractor to evaluate 33.4 miles of trails and tell us how to maintain them. If hired, the job will be completed by August of this year.

Jim moved to forward the Agreement to Furnish Engineering Services of Robert Peccia & Associates, Inc to the County Commissioners for their review with a recommendation for approval.

Lori Moran seconded the motion.

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

Weed Department

- **Department Report**

Contract work for the Montana Department of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has been concluded for the fiscal year. Jim Buechle asked about holding construction sites responsible for weeds. Gordie said this is an enforcement issue, and in this case he will contact Swank Enterprises.

- **Bio-Control**

Jed requested approval of a \$500 donation to the Montana Biological Weed Control Coordination Project. The donation will help expand the number of sites monitored and provide bugs to the Department.

Jim Buechle moved to approved a donation of five hundred dollars to the Montana Biological Weed Control Coordination Project.

Lori Moran seconded the motion.

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

The Board endorsed continued support of an annual donation of five hundred dollars to the Weed Rodeo. This event takes place in June and weed pulling is done on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River.

Other Business

Jed notified the Board that the Riverbend Concert Series, held annually at Sliter Park, received approval from the County Health Department to proceed. It was agreed that the County also approve the Memorandum of Understanding for the event.

As part of the ongoing Volunteer Park expansion, the State required that the sidewalk along Hwy 93 be maintained by the County. Pursuant to this, a **County/State Memorandum of Agreement US93 / N-5 Flathead County – Lakeside, MT Volunteer Park Expansion June 2020** was approved by the County Commissioners.

Jed assured the Recreational Program Manager that the Department will shift gears to continue to offer sports programs at other County owned park sports fields.

Matters of the Board

There were no matters of the Board.

Volunteer Park Tour

The meeting was temporarily adjourned at 9:47am, for travel to Volunteer Park in Lakeside.

Clyde moved to temporarily adjourn the meeting.

Lori Moran seconded the motion.

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

The meeting reconvened and was called to order at Volunteer Park in Lakeside at 10:15AM, President Woll presiding.

Bruce Ennis reviewed a schematic showing both phases of Volunteer Park. This park is the County’s most popular park by far, seconded by Herron Park in Kalispell. The new construction is an expansion of the existing park.

Bruce distributed copies of the breakdown of 600 and 1350 cubic yards of material delivered to the lakebed in two sections that included pea gravel and blended washed gravel. In addition, he provided a summary of the expansion history, which began in August 2019, when the property was acquired by Sand Wedge LLC, after the Flathead County Commission approved the recommendation of the County Weeds & Parks Board to adopt a preliminary **Property Transfer Agreement** with Sand Wedge. Work then began on park plans and the scope of work. On December 2, 2019, a well-attended public meeting was held in Lakeside regarding the park in general and adaptive re-use of a former real estate office (7191 Hwy 93S) into a new facility for the West Shore Community Library.

Work on the park expansion continued through the winter, and existing systems were configured to merge & coordinate with the existing park infrastructure. The goal of the expansion is to provide an easy to maintain, unified County park that can be enjoyed by all ages & abilities.

Adjourn

Lori Moran moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:25AM.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion.

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

Approved:



Pete Woll, Board President

10/5/20

Date