

Flathead County Weed/Parks/Recreation
MINUTES
Board of Directors
Meeting Date: August 1, 2011

Members of the Board in attendance:

Clyde Fisher, Ray Sanders, Jim Watson

Members of the Board not in attendance:

James Buechle, Elise Robocker

Also in attendance:

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

Others Present:

Johanna Bangeman – Citizen

Mayre Flowers – Citizens for a Better Flathead

Todd Garrett – Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Sharon Hopkins – Bigfork Advisory Committee

Clifford Kipp – Foy's to Blacktail Trails

Keith Koslosky – Bigfork Soccer

Ian MacCallum – Bigfork Soccer

Tamara Tanberg – Lakeside Parks Advisory Committee

Jim Vashro – Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Andy Young – Foy's/Herron 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 July 11, 2011. The meeting convened at 8:33 AM, Chairman Sanders presiding.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the July 11, 2011 meetings of the Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation Board of Directors were distributed to the members of the Board and approved.

Public Comment

Bitterroot Lake Property – Davar Gardner stated that his Bitterroot Lake property located adjacent to Flathead County's Blue Grouse Park is still for sale, and offered it to the County for 100K, a significant reduction from the Dec 2010/Jan 2011 appraisals that ranged from 140K – 245K. The subject property has approximately 70' of lake frontage and is approximately 6/10 of an acre. Gardner indicated that he cleaned up the property and worked on the drainage, which now works considerably better.

Superintendent Jed Fisher stated that he was not interested in the cabin on the subject property and that the biggest benefit would be for overflow parking. Jim Vashro of Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks stated that the water access at this location was limited.

The Board agreed that they would meet to tour the property on Wednesday, August 3, 2011 at 1:00 PM.

Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks Report

Jim Vashro of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks stated that after 15 years, fishing access which was administered by Parks has shifted back to Fisheries. Todd Garrett was introduced as the new employee responsible for fishing access coordination. In addition, Mr. Vashro stated that a maintenance position and a weed position have been filled.

After 7 years, Lake Five construction has begun and in mid-September there will be a new fishing access site. Lake Blaine has a long-term private fishing access agreement with the Weavers. Echo Lake fishing access is 90% under water and is posted as no wake until rescinded – most likely in early September

Award Presentation to Board by Citizens For A Better Flathead

Mayre Flowers of Citizens For A Better Flathead presented the Board with a Citizen of the Year Organizational Excellence Award 2011. The award was given in recognition for vision and leadership in developing a trails plan for Flathead County that was passed by the County Commission in October 2010.

Chairman Sanders recognized both the PATHS Advisory Committee and Advisory Boards who worked on the project. Jim Watson thanked Johanna Bangeman for her many hours of volunteer service dedicated to this effort. Ms. Bangeman chaired the PATHS group of 5 volunteers over a 2 ½ year period.

Update on Church Slough & Discussion of Revision of 10 Horsepower Restriction

Superintendent Fisher advised the Board that this matter is presently in the court system and a hearing will be held on August 25, 2011. Paperwork has been filed by the plaintiff to shut down the launch. Both County Attorneys Peter Steele and Tara Fugina are assisting Greg Bonilla of MACo in managing the case. Mr. Fisher assured the Board that the County performed in a proper manner.

It was reiterated that the no wake zone was to be retained *until* Fish, Wildlife & Parks completed their study and/or within 24 months. Accordingly, Superintendent Fisher was directed to remove the 10 horsepower requirement sign.

Chairman Sanders commented that access to the Slough is not limited to this location so the County's 10 hp limit sign would not have covered all boaters. Jim Watson stated that Superintendent Fisher has acted according to instructions given by the Board. It was noted that the Fish, Wildlife and Parks study did not include a horse power limit.

Carlyle Johnson Proposed Fees and Usage

Ian MacCallum appeared before the Board to present ideas for generating funds to support the soccer program at Carlyle Johnson Park. This program has become self funded due to budget cuts at Bigfork High School.

Mr. MacCallum's proposal included 1) Charging for admission, 2) Advertising in the Park for those who donate funds, 3) Concessions such as hot dogs & hamburgers during the 5 – 7 home games. Keith Kolosky introduced himself as the soccer coach for the Bigfork High School boy's team and stated that he would promote whatever the Board allowed, agreeing that there would be no increased cost to the County's Parks & Recreation Department. The Board was assured that garbage pick-up would be provided by the group and a "leave no trace" policy would be in effect. There is a push to solicit donations from corporate and other sponsors. The funding is in place for 2011 and the group is starting to raise funds for 2012.

Sharon Hopkins of the Bigfork Advisory Committee stated that the big issue is parking. There would need to be attendants directing traffic. Assistant Superintendent Gordon Jewett requested that all nets be taken down upon conclusion of games to accomplish field maintenance.

It was noted that the County's annual maintenance can run in excess of \$1,500. Practices and games will be coordinated with mowing and watering schedules. Interested parties will meet in October or November to develop a long term plan for Carlyle Johnson.

Jim Watson made a motion to have Superintendent Jed Fisher to work with Chairman Sanders to develop a Memorandum of Understanding between Bigfork High School Soccer and Flathead County for use of Carlyle Johnson Park. Said MOU would include concessions, admission charges, and donor advertising.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

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

Potoczny Park Lease Agreement

Superintendent Jed Fisher presented a renewal permit for lease of Joe Potoczny Park between Flathead National Forest and Flathead County Parks & Recreation Department – **see Attachment A**. This document was reviewed and approved by County Attorney Peter Steele. This agreement allows the County use of a parking area approximately 70' wide by 200' long; a picnic shelter/storage building with a roof size approximately 24' by 24'; and a sign at the entrance to the field.

Jim Watson made a motion to approve the Special Use Permit between the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service and Flathead County Parks & Recreation to expire December 31, 2020.
Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

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

At this point in the meeting Jim Watson requested that Clifford Kipp from Foy's to Blacktail Trails be given the floor.

Foy's to Blacktail Trails Report

Clifford Kipp reported that FTBT recently hosted a Paddlethon at Herron. He is unaware of the outcome.

Mr. Kipp is working on a reimbursement request for the Recreational Trails Program from last spring, and apologized that he was unable to complete it prior to the end of the last fiscal year.

A land purchase is on the horizon this fall for approximately 40 acres to be added to Herron Park. This should be completed before the end of the year.

The Montana Conservation Corps plans to train folks on trail maintenance each season. Because it is commonly the case that the MCC has more volunteers than time, Kipp asked the Board's opinion regarding training volunteers to allow active trail maintenance without direct supervision. Each volunteer would complete 32 hours of training/crew work and would be covered by MCC insurance. Kipp indicated that all trail construction and maintenance will meet the minimum Forest Service standards. This topic will be reviewed with the County Attorney.

Kipp stated that water at the parking lot would be fabulous for dog walkers, runners and bikers.

Jim Watson commented that the trail counters are being replaced with modern digital equipment with a plan to install them at the entrances to the park as opposed to being on the trails. The units run 2K to 3K including software.

Clyde Fisher made a motion to have Flathead County Parks & Recreation Department pay for half of the cost of one trail counter for Herron Park– approximately \$1,000.

Jim Watson seconded the motion.

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

Bigfork Advisory Committee

Carlyle Johnson – Sharon Hopkins reported she met with Ian MacCallum regarding the use of the field for soccer. The meeting went well, with discussion regarding the needs of the soccer group and the requirements of the County. The sports groups will be in contact with the Advisory group to discuss schedules.

Ms. Hopkins commented that groups such as Rotary, Masons & Lions all have funds that might be used for Carlyle Johnson. It was stated that there is a no dog policy at this park (and all sports parks), and there is a “No Dogs” sign in place.

Foy/Herron Advisory Report

Andy Young reported that the group now has full participation with the addition of one regular and one alternate member.

Foy’s Lake Beach Access – The Advisory Committee is in the process of calling and emailing the Planning and Zoning Department to endorse the improved access from the path to the shore at Foy’s Lake beach. Plans include trail hardening, which is currently eroding because of the wet season, and improvement of the boat ramp. The Montana Conservation Corps is willing to do some of the work.

Mr. Young questioned the maximum capacity of the dock at Foy’s beach, which has seen a lot of use this season in particular due to the high water and less beach available, resulting in less disbursement of people. Superintendent Jed Fisher stated that there is no known maximum capacity.

Herron Park – Hang tags are being sold primarily to equestrians, with the proceeds going to Flathead Combined Training Association for work at the Park. There is continuing discussion regarding fundraising efforts. Superintendent Jed Fisher questioned a contribution to Flathead County Parks & Recreation, which would be used for park maintenance and for purchases such as a baler & swather for haying.

Because of a recent situation at Herron regarding a user group painting course markings, Young questioned if the County’s agreement covered defacement of County property, and was assured that this is covered in the Park Rule Enforcement and also the Facility Rental Agreement. Young requested a summary of the costs associated with maintaining the park. This information could be relayed to users and potential users to help spread the word and make the fees sound reasonable.

Jim Watson stated that he would like to permanently move the sledding hill access road to its current location, which is a more direct approach, as opposed to the former location that effectively cuts the park in half. Road improvement with replacement of the culvert would do a better job in hardening the ground prior to anyone driving on it. At the same time, Mr. Watson would like to have Flathead Valley Community College look into making improvements in the sledding hill to create a more even slope.

Foys to Blacktail Trails Report

This item was moved up on the agenda.

Lakeside Advisory Report

Ben Williams – Tamara Tanberg requested an invoice template so that Lakeside Community Foundation can send Flathead County an invoice for residual funds from construction. The tennis courts are very busy and appreciated. One of the better players in the area has commented that this is the favorite court. The retaining wall does an effective job in cutting the wind.

Jennifer Drew is in the process of paying for insurance as long as the tennis community isn't under contract to maintain the courts or to make decisions regarding maintenance. Superintendent Jed Fisher will review this matter.

Volunteer Park – There is still trash in spite of 2 additional cans. Superintendent Fisher reported that he and Trevor Schaffer are working to install a wood slat fence between the Marina and Bierney Creek Launch. Cash-in-lieu funds have been allocated for this purpose, with 4K being the total cost for preparation and paving. Bruce Ennis will stain the fence and gable ends at his cost.

Somers Beach – This beach is being heavily used this season. Superintendent Fisher stated that in order to obtain the property trailers had to be allowed.

Middle Forks Advisory Committee

There was no one present.

Adoption of By-Laws

Superintendent Jed Fisher stated that the proposed By Laws had been reviewed and approved by County Attorney Peter Steele – see **Attachment B**.

Jim Watson made a motion to adopt the By Laws as submitted.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

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

Rescue Animal Shelter – Flathead County Parks & Recreation

Superintendent Fisher reported that the shelter is working well with Assistant Superintendent Gordon Jewett helping out occasionally. There is only one other existing pilot program in the State. Lance Norman provides hay which is cut from the County's Happy Valley Park, and two ladies volunteer their time each day to come in and feed the horses.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been suggested with a recommendation of a daily fee for care and upkeep. It was also suggested to reference the shelter as an "impound" to assist with obtaining grant funds.

Other Business

Vetville Park – Superintendent Jed Fisher reported that he is on hold with further action due to the high water table this season. The County GIS Department has provided a map of the area, which Larry Van Rinsum of the Soil Conservation District will pass along to the Army Corps of Engineers.

Plum Creek Tansy Efforts – Superintendent Fisher reported that there has been difficulty in coordinating efforts to eliminate Tansy Ragwort on Plum Creek property. This property borders both Lincoln and Flathead Counties, each with a differing approach for control. After several discussions and an onsite meeting to review the situation, Plum Creek personnel support Flathead County’s management approach.

Horace Sanders Memorial Park – An Memorandum of Understanding is being drafted between the Montana Department of Transportation, Rails to Trails, and Flathead County. MDT will own the Park and will permit and install the vault toilet at their expense. It will be leased/contracted to Flathead County, who will perform general maintenance, including pumping the toilet. Rails to Trails will monitor and be responsible for correcting minor deficiencies. The project is approximately 2 acres and located near the intersection of Ashley Creek and Highway 93 bypass. There are no roads to the park and the only access would be from the bypass trail.

Sportsman’s Bridge – Jim Watson reported that this project has been in process for 5 years and will provide access from Somers to Bigfork except at the bridge. Initial public scoping on 3 designs is underway. Proposed are two 12’ lengths with an 8’ shoulder which will be adequate for cyclists and pedestrians.

GPS Weed Mapping – Jim Watson asked how the weed mapping is progressing. Superintendent Jed Fisher responded that it remains problematic, with the GPS units and associated software still functioning poorly. Mr. Watson stated that it appears that the mapping hardware and software is inoperable and unsuitable for our needs.

Jim Watson made a motion to authorize a request for a full refund of the purchase price of the GPS units unless corrections can be completed within 30 days.

Clyde Fisher seconded the motion.

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

Pros and cons of the potential purchase of Davar Gardner’s Bitterroot Lake property were discussed.

Adjourn

Jim Watson made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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, September 12, 2011 at 8:30 AM in the conference room at 311 FFA Drive, Kalispell, Montana, and the August 1, 2011 meeting was adjourned at 11:00 AM.