

**Flathead County Weed/Parks/Recreation
MINUTES
Meeting of the Board of Directors
Meeting Date: October 5, 2020**

Members of the Board in attendance:

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

Members of the Board not in attendance:

All Board members were in attendance.

Also in attendance:

Jed Fisher, Superintendent; Gordon Jewett, Assistant Superintendent; Haily Hoff, Clerk

Others Present:

Peggy Hedin, Debbie Meiers, Kip Smith, Richard Lauer, Jim Watson, Amanda Davey, Noel Jinings

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 October 5, 2020. The meeting convened at 8:30 AM, President Woll presiding.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the September 14, 2020, meeting of the Flathead County Weed, Parks & Recreation Board of Directors were distributed to the members of the Board.

Jessica Treweek moved to approve the September 14, 2020 Board minutes.

Lori Moran seconded the motion.

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

Public Comment

There was no public comment. President Woll thanked all mask wearers and reminded everyone in attendance to please keep them on and stay mindful of social distancing.

Parks & Recreation

○ **Rails to Trails – Meridian Trailhead Mural Painting & Maintenance**

Kip Smith of Rails to Trails has engaged an artist to paint a mural over the existing graffiti on the rock wall near the Meridian trail. Rails to Trails will cover the cost as well as the first year of cover-ups if necessary. Research indicates that graffiti artists like open spaces and a mural will likely deter future defacing of this site. Timing is key at this point in the season to complete the work while the weather is conducive. Jim Buechle said that they should go ahead with the project since there is no cost or commitment affixed to the Parks Department. Kip Smith mentioned that his group has been painting over graffiti for years and this is just a new effort to discourage future issues.

Jessica Treweek moved to approve the paint project and have a policy in place by the end of the one-year timeline.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion.

Discussion followed regarding potential projects in the future. It was agreed that all future murals on future walls will need board approval. All in favor – the motion was carried.

Jed Fisher reported that the limited maintenance on our trail system as a whole has held up pretty well and the evaluation stands at a 7. Safety issues exist and will be addressed with the engineer.

○ **ADA Sidewalk Project by MDT at Volunteer Park**

Montana Department of Transportation has ADA sidewalk improvements to complete in front of Volunteer Park in Lakeside. All work is to be performed by DOT personnel at no cost to Flathead County but confirmation of location needs to be ironed out.

Jim Buechle moved to support the concept for additional ADA work at Volunteer Park.

Jessica Treweek seconded the motion.

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

○ **Request for Surplus of County Park in Many Lakes – Corey Rubin**

Corey Rubin was not in attendance. Jed Fisher explained that 15 parks in the Many Lakes area were given to Flathead County Parks & Recreation through parks in lieu of cash when the developments were made. Many of these parks are unusable but access exists because most of them are along the roadsides. The Flathead County Parks Department is unable to gift these parcels back to the Home Owners Association. The Master Plan would need to be revised and the evaluation and appraisal procedure is very expensive and time consuming to attempt to sell county property. Jim Buechle suggested that Jessica and Lori take a tour to Many Lakes so they can see what these properties look like.

Jessica Treweek made a motion to deny sale of any park land at this time.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion.

Lori Moran stated that she would like to explore options to surplus park land. Jim Buechle suggested that Lori and Jessica form a committee to spearhead the effort. All in favor – the motion was carried.

○ **Herron Park Multi-User Safety – Continuing Discussion**

A bike vs. horse accident has spurred an ongoing conversation concerning the safety of Herron Park users. Jed Fisher sent the incident detail to the Weed & Parks Board as well as the Flathead County Commissioners to address the issue promptly. Signage needs to be implemented so that all users are aware that horses have the right-of-way. Peggy Hedin stated that on the trail in question, signs should be placed at the trail head, midway through and at the end where people congregate. Peggy opined that the signage should be graphic, colorful and dramatic with minimal words to capture attention of trail users who are sometimes traveling swiftly. Mr. Lauer feels that a lot of the problems exist because of unfamiliar users. An interface with downhill mountain bikers is needed and Foy's to Blacktail Trails is willing to work with the Flathead County Parks Department on sign development. Peggy also mentioned that sign placement would be valuable in the parking lot, the crest of Chase Overlook and many of the trail intersections. Jed Fisher stated the more signs, the merrier when it comes to public safety.

Lori Moran moved to approve Herron Park sign verbiage and placement under Jed Fisher's discretion.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion.

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

President Woll stated that a professional person to assess trails would be beneficial throughout the Herron Park system to prioritize work and maintenance projects.

Jim Buechle made a motion to move forward to analyze trails in Herron Park.

Jessica Treweek seconded the motion.

Discussion continued about the importance of recommendations from professional independent study as well as input from park users. A longstanding drainage issue needs to be addressed. Water diversion and/or a bridge have been mentioned in prior years but deemed to costly. It was agreed that a professional assessment is necessary. All in favor – the motion was carried.

Mr. Fisher voiced his concern about the potential for herbicide over application with volunteer weed control work. All of the good work done by the Foy's to Blacktail Trails group is greatly appreciated. Richard Lauer added that nothing further will take place this fall as they are out of volunteers. Clear communication and concise spray reports are imperative.

Jed Fisher noted that Gabe Dillon was unable to attend today's meeting and asked that the following information be read aloud into the meeting:

Foy's to Blacktail Trails Report

June meeting minutes

I saw one typo in the minutes: FTBT received permission to spray a 60' (sixty foot) corridor versus the current 15' corridor, not 60" (sixty inch).

In the section about the kiosk construction, I'd like to make clear that yes, organizations donated professional design time, materials, and installation to erect the structure. However, the organizations that were recognized for donating large sums (\$25,000) did not donate for the kiosk but rather to help expand Herron Park. Flathead County was amongst those entities to give a large sum.

Spring 2020 weed spraying

The first two days of weed spraying on the John Chase Forest and the Foy's to Blacktail Trail were shared during the June Weeds/Parks board meeting. The remainder of the applications occurred on July 2, 14 and 15. See attached spreadsheet and map.

In all, 150 volunteer hours were logged to perform this work. 70 hours were spent spraying and another 80 hours were spent transporting crew and materials to the remote locations.

FTBT elected to forego a fall application in order to let chemical saturation in the ground have more time to dissipate.

National Public Lands Day

13 people attended NPLD on Saturday, September 26. Every drainage feature along Notch and Overlook trails got cleared and edges of the trail were tamped down. In all, 40 hours of volunteer labor was performed.

On 9/20/2020 and 9/26/2020, a total of 2 hours was spent scooping poop in all the popular areas near the Herron Park trailhead. A total of 20 pounds was removed.

Herron Park observations

I'm happy to see movement on the safety discussion despite being asked to stop with any efforts to that end. I see the Birch Creek drainage, culvert, and bridge discussion as separate from working on a safety plan for trail users. I'd urge the Parks Department to work with and let the user groups collaborate on the safety issue since they use the trails and have in-depth knowledge of the system. Safety is a social issue, not an engineering problem.

We're happy to see a fall weed spraying application in Herron Park. Based on our work this summer, we estimate a 2-man crew can spray all 13 miles of trails in Herron Park in two working days. I'm curious how many miles of trails were covered in this application.

I spoke with Gordie about the locks for the pit toilets at Herron Park that cannot be locked open. If someone were to be locked inside one of those toilets, it could be a serious liability issue for the county. I'm curious how many parks in the county have these similar style locks.

Much thanks,
Gabriel Dillon
Program Coordinator

Parks & Recreation Department Report – Gordon Jewett, Amanda Davey

Amanda reported that registrations are open for outdoor fall sports. We are currently waiting for guidelines from the Health Department regarding indoor basketball programming limitations. Mrs. Davey ran an outdoor Co-Rec 3 on 3 basketball league at the Conrad Complex, she set up and refereed the entire league to keep the expense down and make it more profitable. We lost three CoRec softball teams this season due to Covid19 but the beach volleyball grew in size again this year. Two fields at the Conrad Complex were rented out to the 406 Soccer Club two nights per week for their own independent league. Amanda explained the continuing struggle we have experienced in attempting to fill the vacant Recreation Program Coordinator position. The silver lining here is a salary savings to offset lost revenue from programs that we had to cancel due to Covid19. Clyde Fisher voiced his concerns about the unwillingness of people to work.

Jed and Gordie met with Val Parsons at the Gateway to Glacier Trail. Water has been sheeting and runs down the trail. Work is being discussed with an engineering firm to remedy the problem. Gordie reported that vandalism at Sliter Park has been an ongoing issue and the bathrooms have since been locked to prevent further damage. An irrigation problem exists in the new addition of Volunteer Park. Mark Buck has been involved in an investigation with the company that installed the system to try to locate the leak and have been unsuccessful thus far.

Lincoln Chute of OES and Peter Steel have identified a potential fuel reduction logging project behind Belton Chalet. Ten loads of lumber could come out but the work may not be able to be completed because of scenic corridor rules.

Weed Department Report – Gordon Jewett, Noel Jinings

Noel Jinings explained that this season has been different but a lot of landowners took advantage of on-site consultations. This service gives people the opportunity to walk and learn while an assessment is made to discuss management options. Empowering landowners with this kind of knowledge is a large part of our program. Ms. Jinings has recently conducted 53 site visits, 274 inspections, 23 Planning and Zoning inspections and 220 weed management plans have been returned. A webinar was also held in cooperation with the Flathead Conservation District in September.

Gordon Jewett reported that fall herbicide applications are in full swing after the weather change and will continue through most of the month as the conditions allow. Treatments in Herron Park and Bonneville Power easements are also planned. The second round of roadside mowing is nearly complete and fall hydroseeding projects will be completed over the next six weeks. Jed Fisher added that long-time employee, Aaron Guzman has been replaced by Spencer Leer.

Requests to Appear Before the Board

There were no requests to appear before the Board.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Matters of the Board

President Woll voiced his concern that no one is currently in the front office to serve the public. He asked if the salary savings from this year could be applied to extending the seasonal administrative position. If Haily is sick or needs to take time off, often times there is no one to cover the front office from October through March.

Jessica Treweek moved to amend the budget to allow an increase to aide in the extension of the seasonal front office position.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion and added that it should be worked on immediately. There being no discussion and all in favor, the motion was carried.

Adjourn

Jessica Treweek moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:36 AM.

Jim Buechle seconded the motion.

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

Approved:



Pete Woll, Board President Date


