

**JACKSON COUNTY PARKS COMMISSION
1992 WARREN AVENUE
JACKSON, MICHIGAN 49203**



September 6, 2017

CALL TO ORDER: Mike Way, Chairman at 8:00 a.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Present: Cmr. **Beaman, DuBois, Edgar, Price, Seitz, Shotwell, Snyder, Torres, and Way**
Absent: Cmr. **Polaczyk**
Ex-Officio: **Jeff Hovarter**, Parks Director
Staff: **Becky Humphrey, Kyle Lewis, Jack McCloughan, Mark Vysoky**
Visitors: **Roger Gaede, Debra Kubitskey**, County Assistant Administrator, **Mike Overton**, County Administrator, **Rick Sigers**, Jackson County Parks Association

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Price, supported by Seitz, to approve the September 6, 2017 Agenda as amended by adding to Business Section, 6d. Burns Property – Partnership with The Nature Conservancy. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Rick Sigers – I hope each of you were able to make it to your County Parks this year. The parks are fantastic; you can see the attentions to detail that were given to them – very noticeable! Great job Jack and crew!!

Roger Gaede – Regarding the second paragraph of the Park Director’s report: Previously performed study of all the county parks by the parks staff and commission will be a meaningful starting point for determination of condition of each park. Some corrective actions were accomplished, but not all conditions. The study would be a very good reference for continued improvements that are still needed in many county parks.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- August 2017 Minutes
- Communications
- Monthly Staff Report for August 2017
- Receive July 2017 Financial Report
- Receive July 2017 Financial Summary Report
- Approval of July 2017 Claims Report

Moved by Price, supported by Edgar to approve the September 2017 Consent Agenda. Motion carried.

COMMUNICATIONS

1. Facebook Post – June 30, 2017 from Jackie Wakeman-Littlejohn
Re: Cascades County Park & Falls
2. Letter from Ms. Lee Gleason responding to Letter received
Re: Sparks Park Connector Trail
3. E-mail chain between Ann Swain, Clark Lake and Kyle Lewis, Manager of Park Facilities and Events

Re: Memorial Benches for the Jackson County Park at Clark Lake

4. **FFWT Board** minutes August 8, 2017 (*At Meeting*)
5. **Jackson County Parks Association** minutes of August 22, 2017
6. **Cascades Park Foundation** – Meeting not until August 29, 2017
7. **Champion Team** minutes - No Meeting

MONTHLY STAFF REPORT

- The Pleasant Lake County Park Bathhouse Renovation Project will go out for bid in the next few weeks. We approximate \$85,000 to address issues with the structure. This will not solve all of the user and maintenance concerns but will allow us to install all new bathroom fixtures, toilets, sinks, and partitions. We will also be sealing and painting the floor and wall surfaces where appropriate. We anticipate the acceptable bid will be brought to the Park Board for approval in either October or November and the work will be completed by spring.
- Several Township Supervisors have requested to meet with Parks staff to discuss ideas and concerns they have in regards to county parks. We have met with Henrietta Township, and will be meeting with Columbia Township and Norvell Township representatives in the coming weeks. There appears to be both great enthusiasm and frustration with the need and pace of improvement to out county parks. Some of the township representatives feel promises and funding were promised but has not been delivered. I believe the demand and frustration is going to continue to grow. Staff and the Park Board need to have a discussion regarding the appropriate response to the needs/ concerns. At the moment there simply is not any funding available to make even small improvements to these parks. The 2018 budget request for park capital improvements submitted to Administration was in excess of \$1.4 million dollars. No funding is being recommended in the draft budget being forwarded to the County Commission. This will leave staff in a very difficult position and may likely further erode trust between the County and some of the Townships. One of the items in our 2018 Parks Capital Request that could improve the situation was funding for development of park site master plans for each of the out county parks. This request was staff's highest priority request for several reasons. 1) There likely has never been a comprehensive study of the county park system developed. Without this information it becomes very difficult to be proactive and develop strategies for increased investment in the park system. 2) The community involvement process that is a part of park master planning builds stakeholders at a time when we need many stakeholders if we expect to be successful in securing a long term funding source for park improvements. 3) Without planning park staff is left to decide "winners and losers". We can only react to the complaints and dissatisfaction that comes from our residents without any direction or solutions. We get pulled in many different directions and in the end everyone is unhappy. This is not a healthy environment to work in.
- The current physical state of the Cascades Golf Course has me very concerned. The overall condition of the golf course has worsened over the past two summers. Rounds played on the course are currently at or above the amount of play in past seasons, but the comments and concerns being shared by users of the course regarding the condition of some greens, fairways, and sand bunkers is alarming. We have received notice from a couple of our long time league groups that they are considering the possibility of moving to another course in 2018 because of the declining conditions at the Cascades Golf Course. One of the contributing factors is the nearly 60 year old irrigation system. The system is mechanical (hydraulic), rather than electronic. They have not installed mechanical irrigation for many decades and

finding replacement parts is nearly impossible. The cast iron piping used in the 1950's and 60's surpassed its life expectancy twenty years ago. We are experiencing blow outs in the main lines of the system in places that would indicate the piping has reached a critical condition. Loss of the irrigation system would likely cause the golf course to close. You simply cannot maintain greens, tee boxes, or quality fairways without daily scheduled watering. On a 200 acre parcel of land you cannot water by hand. We are currently looking at our options and will bring a recommendation to the Park Board for consideration. The cost of replacing the irrigation system would likely exceed \$600,000.

- The boat ramp at Lime Lake County Park had to be repaired recently. The ramp is designed with seven large horizontal concrete planks that stack side by side into the lake from the shoreline. The last plank is approximate 16 to 20 feet off shore in about five feet of water. We discovered last week that the two planks furthest from shore had slipped on an angle into deeper water leaving a very large hole between plank six and seven. Apparently a park user was attempting to put his boat into the lake two weekends ago and his trailer tire got stuck (sunk) in this large hole. This creates a dangerous situation for users. Staff, in diving gear, was able to get a chain around the two planks and with a front end loader, pull the two planks back into the correct position. However, while diving, they discovered the area just off the end of the last plank is nearly eight feet deep and the lake bottom is washing out underneath the last two planks. Just another ten feet further into the lake the water depth is back up to five feet. This tells us there is a larger hole just off the end of the boat ramp. The cause of this wash out is easy to explain. Simply put, it has become common for boat owners to maneuver their boats on to the trailer by a technique known as "power loading". They position their boat in front of the trailer and then throttle the boat hard, driving the boat up onto the trailer using the boat engines torque. This technique, when the engine proper increases in speed suddenly, washes out the bottom of the lake below the prop do to the sudden and extreme force. We see evidence of this same problem at several of our other county parks as well. Michigan State Parks prohibit power loading and have the ability to levy a fine or suspend an owner's use of the state park boat launch. The alternative to power loading is to hook a tow rope onto the bow of the boat and turn the gear handle that every trailer is equipped with. This is the proper way to trailer a boat but is apparently too much work for some boat owners. Summary, the power loading technique is doing great damage to our lake bottoms and boat ramps. Staff would like the Park Board to consider a Park Ordinance that would prohibit the use of power loading as a technique to trailer boats in Jackson County Parks.
- FYI.....Mark Vysoky and I will be attending the National Recreation & Parks Association Conference in New Orleans the week of September 25th thru 28th. Mark received a scholarship to attend the NRPA Conference through the Michigan Association of County Park Professionals.

BUSINESS ITEMS – Discussion Items

- a. County Parks Boat Ramps – "Power Loading"
- b. Golf Course Irrigation – Golf Course Conditions
- c. 2018 Parks Capital Improvements Funding
- d. Park Board Planning/Visioning Workshop
- e. Burns Property – Partnership with The Nature Conservancy

PUBLIC COMMENT

Roger Gaede – Regarding hiking trail example for Burns Property: MSU's Hidden Lake Gardens of 755 acres has 5 miles of hiking trails that are little more than foot paths. Maintenance consists of hand trimming of overhanging branches and down-falls. Volunteers participate in the maintenance.

Mike Overton – Men’s Garden Club meeting this Thursday, September 7, 2017 at Hidden Lake Gardens at 6 p.m.

DIRECTOR COMMENTS – Jeff Hovarter

None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Cmr. Price – Four things:

- 1) Thank you for the lights at The Cascades.
- 2) Could there be a sign that says “Cascades Golf Course” on the fence at the bend to better identify the course?
- 3) Could I get the numbers for attendance and money for The Cascades and Cascades Splash Pad?
- 4) The grassy area at The Cascades – for 2018 could you get rid of the small ponds in the grassy area behind the seating?

Cmr. Beaman – The re-dedication of the Victims of Violent Crimes Memorial was wonderful. Did a great job! The people that attended the ceremony really liked the new location for the memorials. There was some really great feedback!

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned to the call of the Chair at 9:25 a.m.

Mike Way, Chairman

Jackson County Parks Commission