

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION

Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee

October 13, 2016

MSU Diagnostic Center
4125 Beaumont Road
Lansing, MI 48910

PRESENT FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Commissioner Louise Klarr, Chair
Commissioner Christine Crumbaugh, Co-Chair
Commissioner Tim Nichols, Co-Chair

PRESENT FOR THE MSPAC

Jim Bradley
Mike McDonald
Ann Conklin
Bob Hoffmeyer
Chris Graham
Tom Bailey
Jim Hendricks
Amy Trotter
Julie Clark

ABSENT

Mike Foote
Mary Pitcher

OTHERS PRESENT

DNR Management and Staff
Ron Olson
Vicki Anthes
Debbie Jensen
George Lauinger
Jacklin Blodgett
Jason Fleming
Heidi Frei

MICHIGAN STATES PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

OPENING COMMENTS

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 a.m. by Commissioner Louise Klarr. Commissioner Klarr welcomed everyone, and reminded them to please sign in. Commissioner Klarr asked the commissioners to each introduce themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes were approved for the August 11, 2016 meeting. Commissioner Klarr motioned for approval of the minutes with Chris Graham seconding that motion. Motion to accept minutes passed unanimously.

BELLE ISLE STAFF RECOGNITION

Ron Olson presented a plaque of recognition to **Theresa Bryan**, Park Ranger at Belle Isle Park. On July 16, 2016 Theresa was called to a scene on the Belle Isle Park Bridge where a park visitor had been walking and reportedly had a heart attack. Upon Theresa's arrival the visitor was not responsive, Theresa performed CPR until the EMT's arrived, the visitor was still not responding when taken by ambulance to the local hospital. Staff later found out that the woman had survived and was in stable condition. Theresa's actions that day very likely saved the visitor's life. Chief Olson thanked Theresa for her outstanding performance and service. Theresa was joined at the recognition by her parents, husband, children and several friends.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment today.

INFORMATIONAL BUSINESS

Flint Riverfront Restoration Project:

Amy McMillan, Director, Genesee County Parks and **Janet Van De Winkle, Project Sustainability Director, Genesee County Parks** were present and gave a presentation on the plans and vision for the Flint Riverfront Restoration project. Amy reviewed various aspects of the project, sharing that it encompasses approximately 80 acres up the river to the Hamilton Dam. It should be noted that the Hamilton Dam is the single most dangerous dam in Michigan at this time; part of the project includes the removal of Hamilton Dam. Removal of the dam will make the area safer and improve fish passage and encourage fishing.

The riverfront project concentrates on bringing visitors closer to the river by providing numerous recreational opportunities including an amphitheater. This project will highlight the entire riverfront area through downtown Flint.

Many partners have been involved with the development of this project. The project focused on the Chevy Commons area, where the manufacturing industry was heavily concentrated and the site highly contaminated. Kettering University was instrumental in the clean-up effort and the greening of the entire site is taking place. Amy stated that they are actively pursuing grant opportunities to assist with funding. **Ron Olson** noted that there is an approved Trust Fund grant to acquire some additional property currently owned by a Canadian Rail Company.

Numerous comments and questions from the commissioners were answered; including how the relationship with the Iron Belle Trail was contributing to the growth and commitment to the project. Amy McMillan stated that Flint was working hard to make a connection between the trails and parks for the health and welfare of the community. Amy also indicated that during public surveys and comments more trails was the most desired amenity for the park. **Chair Klarr** commented that this long term project was a great opportunity for other river communities to learn and gain experience from.

Bay City/Bay County Representatives Presentation:

Laura Ogar, Bay County Director, Environmental Affairs and Community Development were present with the following members of her team: Ernie Krygier, Bay County Board of Commissioners Chair, Rick Finn, Bay City Manager, Ryan Carley, President/CEO Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, and Eileen Curtis, President/CEO Bay Area Community Foundation.

Laura Ogar presented a slideshow overview of the area, noting the high recreation passport participation in the Bay City area. Laura highlighted the numerous trails that have been developed along the Saginaw Bay shoreline; with some 600 miles of regional trails in the Bay area. The Bay City State Park has a very active friends group that was recognized as one of the leaders in establishing the splash pad. Laura also gave a brief history of the park, donated back in 1922 and a popular destination for many years. The area has a long history of community participation and engagement in the park. Laura shared that in a 1994 master plan, that suggested 14 recommendations, they've worked diligently to make those recommendations reality. There was an addition of a spray park, playscapes, and a bay walk. In all they've added 11 of the recommended amenities.

Laura also spoke of some of the current challenges; such as no shoreline fishing and the challenging walk to the beach area. Laura further explained that access to the beach front is of primary importance to the community. Access over the wetlands to the beachfront would assist with the development of a pier for shore fishing, possible kayaking, canoeing and paddle boarding. Laura expressed that this area has all the right stuff to be a significant destination and hope to market the shoreline area to assist with economics in the area. Laura further explained the need to have restrictions placed by the USACE, lifted. They desire to work with the DNR and USACE to those purposes.

It should be noted that Chief Olson, Senator Mike Green and members of the Bay City team met recently to discuss the best way to move forward. It was agreed by all members of the group that a task force would be developed to begin working on a way forward. It should also be noted that the Iron Belle Trail goes through the park and creates a unique opportunity to create vibrancy in this area.

GENERAL UPDATES

Finance Subcommittee update:

Commissioner Tim Nichols gave a finance subcommittee update to the group regarding the various financial needs of Parks and Recreation; where we are currently and what the committee can do to add additional funding for the significant short falls within the budget. Tim spoke about some of the following ideas to further review:

- Soft Opt Out for the Recreation Passport
- Trail pass fees
- Sportsman's Card
- Increase in camping fees
- Broadening of the locations that require the recreation passport
- Added fee if recreation passport not purchased with vehicle plate

Commissioner Nichols further discussed the addition of trail pass fees, broadening of the recreation passport locations and how that might impact revenue. **Ron Olson** gave various examples of linear trails, and other entry points that currently don't require a recreation passport, as well as indicated they did expand the requirement to state forest campgrounds. **Olson** further explained that the Secretary of State does charge an additional fee of \$5.00 when an individual purchases a passport other than with their vehicle plate.

Mr. Graham noted that the state of Wisconsin developed a non-motorized fee for use of state trails. He furthered the idea of a redesigned recreation passport with trail utilizations as an added feature and cost. **Commissioner Nichols** suggested that revenue numbers from Wisconsin be sought to review the impact on revenue this had. Ron Olson noted that a meeting has been scheduled for a time in November, with members of the Wisconsin team as they have very similar ageing infrastructure issues.

Event Policy Update:

Jason Fleming walked through the current Event Policy draft; the previous policy and an exercise were presented to the committee at a previous session. Jason explained that the goal of the new policy is to not only simplify the process but to clarify it as well in order to be more consistent across the parks and across events.

Firewood Policy:

Jason Fleming and Heidi Frei gave a brief informational on the firewood policy. A recent survey conducted captured information about firewood usage. Jason stressed that the policy is currently under review; that there is not a ban but a proposed restriction. Jason spoke about the need for change due to the impact that the Asian Long Horn beetle, Oak Wilt and other significant disease and insects are having on our state parks that are reflected with the change in policy.

Commissioners asked where people are purchasing firewood. **Heidi** explained that while most people buy firewood locally, approximately 25% bring wood from home. Numerous surveys have been conducted and we find that visitors from Ohio and Indiana are still bringing firewood with them. It should be noted that a major outbreak of the Asian Long Horn beetle is just 5 hours from here and has quarantined 61 square miles in Ohio. This presents a significant issue when we have 242 camping reservations coming in from Ohio and Indiana this weekend, where 25% of those campers are likely to bring firewood.

Jason also noted that this policy change will not affect our current vendor contracts, but will standardize their contract upon renewal. The policy change will require that vendors provide kiln dried firewood. The plan is intended to provide further education and assist with answering questions. These are restrictions not a ban on firewood. Jason walked the commissioners briefly through the reservation process and the must reads regarding firewood for visitors making a reservation. Jason further reviewed the education, communication and enforcement plan.

ACTION ITEMS

2017 PROPOSED MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS

The proposed 2017 meeting dates were reviewed and agreed upon. It was decided that workshop dates would be addressed at a later time.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.