

Wright County Parks Commission Minutes
May 17, 2021
6:00 P.M.

Members in Attendance: Martyn Dibben, Brad Danielson, Sarah Hansen, Melany Leckey
Commissioner Daleiden, Kevin Bergquist, Mitch Klein

Staff in Attendance: Marc Mattice, Brad Harrington

Guests in Attendance: Tim Scheder, Otsego Resident

Absent:

Call to Order: The May 17, 2021 meeting of the Wright County Parks Commission was called to order at 6:15 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: **Commissioner Daleiden moved to accept and approve the March 8, 2021 Parks Commission minutes as presented; seconded by Melany Leckey. The motion carried with all in favor.**

Approval of Agenda: **On a motion by Commissioner Daleiden, and a second by Melany Leckey, all voted in favor of approving the March 17, 2021 agenda as presented.**

Otsego County Park Disc Golf/Citizen Request from Tim Scheder: The Parks Commission heard a request for the development of a disc golf course at Otsego County Park. Tim provided information on the growth of the sport, a potential course layout, and costs. Members had several concerns related to user conflicts, lack of parking related to the usage of the current facilities, tree removal, impact on staff resources and overall location of another course within the system. Members decided it is not a priority at this time to establish this type of infrastructure at Otsego Park. Members believe that after the Systemwide Comprehensive Plan is complete, and if a need is shown through public input, that staff could look at other potential sites after completing an inventory of courses within the general areas (city, county, school, private), and possibly working with the Mississippi Parkwood MOA on a potential 17 acre addition to the park. **On a motion by Bergquist, and seconded by Leckey, all voted in favor of not proceeding with establishment or prioritization of a Disc Golf Course at Otsego Park.**

2020 Annual Report: The year-end report was distributed to the members. Mattice reviewed some highlights and asked for comments or questions. The report will be provided to the Board of Commissioners.

Special Event Permitting: For many years the Department has had an informal process for organizations holding special events such as fun runs, disc golf tournaments, and fundraisers in the park system. The last few years requests for this type of events have increased which has an impact on facilities, staff resources and overall operations. Mattice provided a summary of several comparison counties on their processes and fees. Items such as insurance certificates, fees, waivers, maintenance needs and general guidelines are items Mattice feels needs to be addressed. Members agreed that schools should still not be charged any additional fees other than extra supplies necessary to hold the event, and that a \$200 flat fee for all other requests would be acceptable. Members directed staff to develop the contract, application, and necessary forms to be reviewed at the next meeting of the Parks Commission.

Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan: Mattice provided an update related to the process, schedule and methods that are being used to develop the Wright County Parks and Recreation Systemwide Master Plan. HKGI has been great as we continue to work in developing this plan that will provide guidance for both short- and long-range planning for the department. We will start to solicit, compile, and interpret citizen

input. We will be sharing a booth with Wright SWCD on July 24th at the County Fair. Online comments and participation should start in June and we will be hosting meetings with stakeholders in July and August.

Potential Land Acquisitions: Mattice has been contacted by 3 separate individuals related to our interests in purchasing specific properties:

1. 90 acres - Maple Lake Township
2. 17 acres - Island on Mink Lake
3. 10 acres - French Lake Township

After a great deal of discussion, **on a motion by Bergquist, and seconded by Dibben all voted not to pursue the 90 acre parcel in Maple Lake Township or the 17 Acre Island on Mink Lake.**

On a Motion by Dibben and seconded by Leckey all voted to recommend proceeding with potential acquisition of the 10 acres in French lake Township. This parcel adjoins an existing park and would provide for a more suitable parking solution. This parcel and the determination passed 9 out of 10 decision making principals:

- ✓ Fulfill the vision, mission, and goals of the department?
- ✓ Protect a key natural resource or scenic view?
- ✓ Address a geographic or programming need?
- ✓ Serve an unmet park or trail use for the area?
- ✓ Enhance existing parks or improve service efficiency?
- ✓ Build community awareness or advocacy for parks?
- ✓ Provide environmental sustainability in the short or long term?
- ✓ Provide economic sustainability in the short or long term?
- ✓ Have installation, maintenance & operation costs been addressed?

UPDATES:

Major projects for 2021:

- Bertram Campground playground – Completed
- Collinwood paving – Should begin right after Memorial Day; preconstruction meeting has been held
- Collinwood group camp pit toilet – Scheduled to arrive September 20th
- Interior trail improvements for Ney, Bertram, Stanley Eddy – Dave Crosby has been on site since May 3rd and has been working on the trail improvements; Bertram includes the final segment of the trail around First Lake, the carry in access and the Single Track final stacked loop.
- Crow River Regional Trail – Project came in within budget and was awarded to Knife River; no start date has been identified
- Stanley Eddy/Alama Unit Restoration – The Native Prairie Restoration planting should occur in early June
- Collinwood Native Prairie restoration – The site has been prepped, and seeding will occur toward the end of May.
- Bertram Chain of Lakes South Trailhead Expansion – The grading is completed, and aggregate has been placed; staff will work on the boundary and turf establishment.

Spring Programs/Events: Spring and Summer programs have started off well. So far, we completed the following:

- Hiking Wright Step into Spring @ Bertram
- Master of Disguise @ Ney Park
- Fungus Among Us @ Bertram
- Hiking Wright Step into Spring @ Ney Park

Programs scheduled for the rest of the summer are:

- Hiking Wright on June 19, July 17, and August 21

- Fishing with MN Trout on June 5 and June 19
- Marsh, Prairie and Forests Kids Program on June 25
- Paddle on Series on July 10, July 24, August 14, and September 4
- County Wellness Program on June 26
- Raptor Center @ Bertram on August 21
- Orienteering @ Collinwood on June 12
- Backyard Birds @ Schroeder on July 17

In addition, the Bertram Blast is scheduled for June 20th but we are not sure if the event will happen this year due to unforeseen circumstances with the Race Director. We are beginning to plan Color Me Fall at Bertram for late September/Early October as well. In addition to the programs listed, Carson has been working with multiple Community Education Departments and is now offering various outdoor programs via contract with them. This includes Annandale Community Education and BHM Community Education.

Operations: Operations have been going well. We are continuing to see high usage throughout the system. All summer facilities are up and running including campgrounds. We have a few areas of concern that we have been addressing which include the following:

1. Otsego County Park - We are struggling to find staff for this very high use park which creates a problem with operations and maintenance. The park is typically staffed with Green View contract employees and the funding for this contract is \$37,000 annually. Mattice informed the members he has made an operations change. Restrooms need to be cleaned twice per day. To accomplish this with reduced staffing Mattice has contracted Pro-Clean Service to complete morning cleanings at a rate of \$60 per occurrence. Greenview Staff will work 6 hours per day 7 days per week and will complete the second cleaning along with the routine maintenance of the park. In addition, Mattice worked with John Pregler (County Electrician) and Russell's Security to add automated door control for the restroom which will be open from 8 am to 8 pm daily. With this change to operations, Mattice is confident cost will not exceed the budget.
2. Collinwood Regional Park - The Campground Manager is out on medical leave. This has created a major operation issue as we move into popular camping weekends along with projects and maintenance needs at the park. At this time, we are working with existing staff to complete necessary operations. This will have an impact on the overtime budget line as well as a potentially delaying some projects.
3. Montissippi Park - The Monticello area is being hit hard this year by vandalism on a regular basis. On May 15th, the disc golf course baskets we cut off the standards at Montissippi Park. All baskets were found in the park. Staff will rebuild the standards and have this popular facility in operation before the end of the week.
4. 2022 Budgets - The budget timeline at the County has moved up. Typically, the July meeting of the Parks Commission is heavily focused on the budget and priorities. With this schedule shift Mattice stated that he will send budget items out to the Members in June for comment, and if needed, will request a special meeting of the Parks Commission.

Operational items were discussed, and all members felt that the directions being taken were acceptable and well thought out. Members would like to revisit the changes at Otsego Park to determine if changes to operations have had a negative impact or if this a new approach that should be considered in other areas.

The next meeting is scheduled for **Monday, July 12, 2021**. At Otsego County Park

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m. – members wishing to tour Bertram Park did so at this time.