

**Walworth County Board of Supervisors
Park Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, May 20, 2019
Walworth County Government Center Room 114
100 West Walworth Street, Elkhorn, Wisconsin**

Chair Dan Kilkenny called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Roll call confirmed all members were present: Chair Dan Kilkenny, Vice Chair Nancy Russell, Supervisor Charlene Staples, and Citizen Member Mariette Nowak. Citizen Member Merilee Holst was absent.

Others in Attendance

County Staff: County Administrator David Bretl; Director-Public Works Richard Hough; Assistant Director Fleet/Parks/Facilities and Parks General Manager Dennis Clark; Park Intern Ben Freas

Members of the public: Maggie Zoellner, Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge Board Member; Greg Rajsky, Executive Director-Kettle Moraine Land Trust (KMLT); Jacob Schmidt-Geneva Lake Conservancy Land Specialist and member of the Friends of White River County Park; Don Root, Lake Geneva

Supervisor Staples made a motion, seconded by Citizen Member Nowak, to approve the agenda. Motion carried by voice vote.

Vice Chair Russell made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Staples, to approve the March 18, 2019 meeting minutes. Motion carried by voice vote.

Public comment – Jacob Schmidt, Geneva Lake Conservancy Land Specialist and member of the Friends of White River County Park, reported that despite the weather, there were 200 attendees at the Founder's Day event and 75 for the birds of prey presentation. He reported that the Friends group is considering purchasing a UTV and donating it to the Park. He will follow up with Public Works.

Consent Items

- Reports

- 1) Park Summary Report

Assistant Director Fleet/Parks/Facilities Dennis Clark presented his summary report of work completed, planned and underway at the parks. He asked for input from the Committee on any additional items they would like included in future reports. Citizen Member Nowak requested that whenever trees are planted, the species of the trees are included in the report. Clark noted that Lakeland School students will be building picnic tables and bird houses next school year for placement in the parks in 2020. Nowak asked that chicken wire be put around the bird house entrances to keep predators out. Vice Chair Russell asked about transitioning the land currently being farmed. Clark said three areas are complete and the fourth should be converted this fall after harvest. Director-Public Works Richard Hough added that revenue projections will need to be modified after investigating how much land is involved. Vice Chair Russell asked about the plan for planting an oak savanna in the farm fields. Hough will follow up. Hough said the department is in the process of updating the park plans to bring them current. Hough stated that Clark is looking into who would be performing planned work at the parks – Public Works crews, contractors, volunteers, or a combination of all. Manpower allocation, associated cost projections and potential grant funding will be included in the plans. Vice Chair Russell suggested that the parking lot at White River County Park should be expanded. Clark is meeting Wednesday with a contractor to investigate expanding the parking lot area at the White River County Park. Vice Chair Russell commended staff and Geneva Lake Conservancy for the great job cleaning up the barn for Founder's Day.

2) Update on Park Well Plan

Clark said the wells are tested annually, and the overall results were good. Price Park's nitrate levels were elevated two years ago. In 2020, State policy is changing; if levels are over the limit, the well has to be shut down. Staff will keep monitoring the nitrate levels; if they are too high, the well may have to be dug deeper. Bids are being issued for replacement of the well at Natureland Park this year.

New Business

- Presentation by Friends of Hackmatack on the Wildlife Refuge status
Maggie Zoellner, Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge Board Member and Greg Rajskey, Executive Director-Kettle Moraine Land Trust (KMLT) gave a presentation on the Hackmatack Wildlife Refuge, which was established in 2012 with approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Zoellner said she feels having a national Wildlife Refuge in the County is an exceptional resource and wants to ensure that the public is aware of the efforts to preserve the habitat and benefit the community. Rajskey said the Refuge hosts a variety of migratory birds, waterfowl and other wildlife. The south central portion of the State has a high concentration of breeding birds. Hackmatack is designated as an Urban Refuge because of its proximity to Rockford, Madison, Chicago and Milwaukee. The support from Ducks Unlimited was instrumental in demonstrating how the Refuge would support the waterfowl population. The Refuge ties in well with the Chicago Wilderness Infrastructure Plan, as well as the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan. Hackmatack's goals are to protect and enhance habitats for grassland-dependent migratory birds and protection of wetlands and grasslands; create opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation; and to promote science, education and research to encourage responsible stewardship of our natural resources. The Hackmatack Wildlife Refuge is also situated in the Southeast Glacial Plains Landscape. Rajskey mentioned the partners involved in the Land Protection Plan for Hackmatack and the land protection projects for the future. He showed maps of the 1,409 acres of current protected lands, and said the long-term plan includes protecting 11,200 acres. Refuge oriented tourism generates significant revenue from visitors and the birding community. National Wildlife Refuges attract 40 million people annually and generate \$2.4 billion in sales for local economies. Zoellner explained the Refuge is comprised of a combination of publicly and privately owned land. She thanked the Committee for their time and stated she hoped for future mutually-beneficial collaboration between Hackmatack and the County.

- Approval for the Town of Lyons to use the White River County Park for a Search and Rescue Training Event

Clark said the Town of Lyons Fire Department requested to hold a search and rescue training at White River County Park on June 3 from 6:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. The Park will not need to be closed during the event, and staff has no objections to the fire department using the Park for that purpose. Committee consensus was to approve the decision.

Reports/announcements by Chair – None.

Confirmation of next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 15, 2019 at 1:00 p.m.

Adjournment

On motion by Citizen Member Nowak, seconded by Supervisor Staples, Chair Kilkenny adjourned the meeting at 1:51 p.m.