

**Walworth County Board of Supervisors  
Park Committee Meeting Minutes  
Monday, July 15, 2019  
Walworth County Government Center Room 114  
100 West Walworth Street, Elkhorn, Wisconsin**

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

Roll call confirmed the following members were present: Chair Dan Kilkenny, Vice Chair Nancy Russell, Supervisor Charlene Staples, and Citizen Members Merilee Holst and Mariette Nowak. A quorum was declared.

**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; Groundskeeper Steve Messick

Members of the public: Willie Karidis, Project Manager of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy; Stephen Rostkowski, President of the East Troy Lake Association; Jan Rostkowski, East Troy Lake Association

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

Citizen Member Nowak requested that the words “proper wire” on page 1, line 5 under Park Summary Report be deleted and replaced with the words “chicken wire.” **Supervisor Staples made a motion, seconded by Citizen Member Nowak, to approve the May 20, 2019 meeting minutes with inclusion of the requested change. Motion carried 4-0.** Citizen Member Holst abstained.

**Public comment** – There was none.

**Consent Items**

- Reports

- 1) Park Summary Report

Fleet/Parks/Facilities and Parks General Manager Dennis Clark asked if the Committee had any questions regarding his summary report. Fees for park facility reservations are currently \$50, with a \$100 security deposit required. Director-Public Works Richard Hough said staff is reviewing the proposed fee schedule for 2020 to see if fees need to be adjusted based upon use and revenue. Citizen Member Holst asked about the removal of the plants donated from the 2016 Farm Technology Days. Clark said the plan is to move them later in September and repurpose them to other areas and parks. A volunteer day is already being organized for this work. The plants have become overgrown and obscured by native grasses in their original location. Current thought is that some plants will be placed in the circle in the parking lot at Price Park, and others will be moved closer to the barn at White River Park. Both locations have close water sources, which will make watering and maintenance easier. Master Gardeners will identify and move the plants the third week in September. Clark said the trail Wayfinder stations will include educational pieces on the trails and unique features. Vice Chair Russell asked about progress on the proposed donated UTV from the White River Park Friends Group. Clark said the Friends of the White River Park are meeting this week. Citizen Member Nowak noted she had difficulty locating the Storybook application on the County website. Hough said the County is in the process of revamping its website, and some layers will be eliminated to assist the public to directly access information. Supervisor Staples asked about the progress on the well replacement at Natureland Park. Clark said the project has been re-bid; they have received one bid and are waiting on another.

- 2) Report on CIP Change in Scope of Project #W1947 to include the design work for four parking lots in three County parks for \$25,000, and cancelation of the \$75,000 CIP project planned for 2020 for the replacement of the Price Park Pavilion

Clark said the change in scope of the project will be going to the Public Works Committee for approval today. A vendor will do the preliminary design work for the four parking lots for under \$25,000 instead of doing the projects individually. Hough cautioned that this amount is for design only, and he is concerned about overall project costs. Using in-house labor for some portions of the project to defray costs is being considered. Citizen Member Holst asked if the replacement of the pavilion at Price Park has been eliminated from the project list altogether. Clark said the pavilion is still structurally sound and will be painted to improve its appearance. Citizen Member Nowak asked about decorative plantings in the parking lots. Vice Chair Russell said maintenance of the plants and trees would be a problem and make snowplowing difficult. Unless the plantings were located in the corners or adjacent to the lots, she said it would be labor-intensive and take up needed parking space.

### **New Business**

- Presentation by employee Steve Messick on the state of the prairies  
Steve Messick, Parks groundskeeper, gave an overview of the scheduled maintenance for the 75 acres of planted prairie in the parks. Prescribed burns, which eliminate competing weeds and revitalize the prairie plants, have been placed on a three- to five-year rotation to spread costs out. Two prairie burns are scheduled for each year. The prairies need to be mowed at a 12” height several times per year for the first two to three years to remove competing weed seed heads. Prairie land will be mowed high at the end of the growing season prior to a prescribed burn, and seed will be collected and redistributed to thin areas at the fall volunteer work days. Excessively wet areas need to be monitored closely for clover overgrowth and may need additional seeding. Messick showed maps of the parks indicating the prairie and fen areas. Citizen Member Holst asked about the timeline for the oak savannas. Oak trees in the region are dying out, and preservation of the trees is a critical issue. She feels it would be easier to raise funds for the savannas than the prairie restorations. Clark said the oak savanna projects are still in the budget, and the plan is to plant grasses and wildflowers in the areas first before establishing the oaks. Messick said staff responded to Citizen Member Nowak’s email and sprayed the areas where crown vetch was multiplying. Citizen Member Holst said during Phases I and II of the White River Park development, McHenry County conservation district offered to donate seed. Clark said he would contact them to see if their offer is still available.
- Presentation by Parks Intern Ben Freas on Storybook, trail and future projects  
Parks Intern Ben Freas gave an update on his assigned projects. He has updated all of the trail maps, including changing the overall format to make it more attractive and user friendly by adding pictures to showcase the different features at the parks. Freas updated the Storybook trail application, which included rewriting different trail stops; removing and adding different spots at Natureland Park; creating Storybook stops at White River Park and Price Park; creating and printing tri-fold pamphlets; and with assistance from the County’s GIS division, updated the online Storybook application updates of the trail stops. Way point kiosks are being established at the parks, and Freas worked with GIS to make maps for the kiosks, which will include educational points. His next project is to gather information on the bird species in the parks, select the appropriate bird houses and mount locations. Materials for the houses and predator guards will be purchased, and Lakeland School students will be constructing the bird houses with staff assistance this school year for field installation next spring/summer.
- Presentation by Willie Karidis on Route of the Badger Trail opportunities  
Willie Karidis, Project Manager of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, presented the updated maps of the proposed Route of the Badger trails to connect with current and proposed future planned trails. The Conservancy is partnering with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) to

plan and develop the trails as part of SEWRPC's Vision 2050. Currently 300 miles of existing on and off-trail routes are established, and the entire route will encompass 700 miles. The mission of the Route is to expand smart transportation options, fuel strong businesses and economies, improve public health, enhance regional competitiveness and promote social equality. He indicated on the maps where the proposed connections will be established, which include addition of the Nippersink Trail and a proposed East Troy Trail. He also mentioned that Clark informed him of the Tiffany-Pelishak Trail in Rock County which could potentially become part of the Route. He thanked the Committee for the opportunity to provide the progress update.

- **Presentation by Stephen Rostkowski on the East Troy Mill Pond potential park**  
Stephen Rostkowski, President of the East Troy Lake Association, explained that the Village of East Troy is planning on removing the historical dam on East Troy Lake. Rostkowski gave a presentation showing the location of the dam and lake, which included the beauty of the area and seasonal recreation activities. There are established nature trails to the lake's shoreline, a kayak launch and dog swimming area. The lake area is 30 acres. A wildlife observation area has been constructed at the lake and agriculture students from East Troy High School have created trails and maintained the 27 acres of parkland with Rostkowski's assistance. Eagle Scout candidates have marked and labeled trees and wood duck nests have been constructed. The riparian owners cannot raise adequate funds to repair the dam, and the Village has no plans for the lakebed after the dam is removed except for a "multi-use" trail. The County's Public Works Department has assisted with brush removal and trail cutting. The 8' deep lake has been used as a water source for East Troy area fire departments, and is within easy walking distance from the Village square. After the floods in 2017, the Department of Natural Resources inspected the dam and discovered some deficiencies. Estimates for repairs were projected to cost approximately up to \$700,000, but Rostkowski said removal of the dam would be even more costly. Rostkowski asked the committee to consider acquiring the 27-acre parcel as another County park to preserve the lake and habitat. Citizen Member Holst said the long-range plan for future parks specifies that any future County park would be located in the southwestern portion of the County. Vice Chair Russell said unfortunately, the County does not have funds to undertake another park project; staffing is limited and the tax levy cap would prohibit borrowing. Rostkowski thanked the Committee for allowing him to present his request. No action was taken on this item.

- **Stewardship Grant for White River Park and timing for converting farm field**  
Clark reported that Phase IV of the farmland conversion planting will be done this fall after the crops are out, and Phase V is scheduled for the fall of 2020, when implementation of the oak savannas will commence. Vice Chair Russell stated the Knowles/Nelson Stewardship Grant conditions require that rental of property within the park cease within a specified amount of years. Hough said the farmer renting the land is aware of when the lease will be terminated.

**Reports/announcements by Chair** – There were none.

**Confirmation of next meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 14, 2019 at 1:00 p.m.

### **Adjournment**

**On motion by Vice Chair Russell, seconded by Supervisor Staples, Chair Kilkenny adjourned the meeting at 2:18 p.m.**