



Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission

MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: August 14, 2021

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Location: Zoom Digital Meeting

Members Present: Patricia Scribner, WCPARC President (attending from Pittsfield Township, MI) Janis Bobrin, WCPARC Vice President (attending from Ann Arbor, MI); Daniel Ezekiel, WCPARC Secretary/Treasurer (attending from Ann Arbor, MI), Ricky Jefferson (attending from Ypsilanti Township, MI), Robert Joerg (attending from Delta Township, MI), Robert Marans (attending from Ann Arbor Township, MI), Jo Ann McCollum (attending from Ypsilanti Township, MI), Evan Pratt (attending from Scio Township, MI), Brenda McKinney (attending from Superior Township, MI) and Jason Morgan (attending from Detroit, MI)

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Coy Vaughn, Director; Meghan Bonfiglio, Deputy Director; Ginny Leikam, Superintendent of Park Planning and Natural Areas; Jason Brooks, Manager of Finance and Administration; Ann Ziolkowski, Communication Manager; Jeff Dehring, Park Planner; Peter Sanderson, Park Planner; Allison Krueger, Stewardship Manager; and Rosie Pahl-Donaldson, Park Planner

Others Present: None

1. Call to Order/Moment of Silence

Ms. Scribner called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. with a moment of silence in appreciation of first responders. Ms. McKinney noted that she would be leaving the meeting early – most likely around 3:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call and Announcement of Location

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the July 13, 2021 special meeting were included with the agenda material.

It was moved by Ms. McCollum and seconded by Ms. Bobrin to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2021 special meeting. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 2 Absent (Morgan & McKinney), the motion was approved.

The minutes of the June 8, 2021 regular meeting were included with the agenda material.

It was moved by Mr. Pratt and seconded by Mr. Jefferson to approve the minutes of the June 8, 2021 regular meeting. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McKinney) the motion was approved.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Communications, Projects & Activities

Mr. Vaughn reported on the May communications which were included in the packet.

It was moved by Mr. Marans and seconded by Mr. Ezekiel to accept and file the Communications, Projects & Activities for the month of June 2021, as submitted. 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McKinney) the motion was approved.

6. Financial & Recreation Reports – May 2021

A. Financial Reports

Mr. Brooks reported and stated that the total for the claims for the month of June was \$1,018,235.15 and the total for July was \$523,267.56.

It was moved by Mr. Pratt and seconded by Ms. McCollum to accept and file the Financial Reports for the months of June and July 2021 as submitted. Roll call vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McKinney) the motion was approved.

B. Recreation Reports

Mr. Brooks reported on recreation reports for the months of June and July 2021 and highlighted the impact of the pandemic on the attendance of our Park Facilities.

Ms. Bobrin asked if the reduced capacity at Rolling Hills Water Park was due to COVID or shortage of seasonal staff. Mr. Brooks responded that it is a combination but primarily due to being understaffed.

It was moved by Mr. Pratt and seconded by Ms. Bobrin to accept and file the Recreation Reports for the months of June and July 2021 as submitted. Roll call vote: 10 Ayes, 0 Nays, the motion was approved.

7. Old Business

A. County Farm Park and Meri Lou Murray Rec Center Parking Lot Project

Mr. Dehring explained that at the February 2021 meeting, staff presented the Commission with a report on deteriorating conditions and capacity issues of the parking lots at Nelson Meade County Farm Park and the Meri Lou Murray Recreation Center. Reconstruction of the pathway along Washtenaw Avenue was also discussed in this presentation. The Commission instructed staff to prepare construction plans and bid documents for these three improvement projects.

In response to that directive, a request for proposal (RFP #8129) was prepared by park staff. Midwestern Consulting provided site surveying, civil engineering, and development of construction drawings and specifications for the projects. The RFP document was assembled using the County's standard procurement protocol and advertised by the Purchasing Department in late June. A

mandatory pre-bid meeting was held on July 13 with eight contractors attending. Four proposals were submitted on July 29, 2021 and a tabulation of these bids are provided below.

T & M Asphalt Paving, Inc. – Milford, MI	\$556,502.00
Best Asphalt, Inc. – Romulus, MI	\$629,093.50
Gibraltar Construction, Co. – Trenton, MI	\$661,166.50
Asphalt Specialist, Inc. – Pontiac, MI	\$649,562.50

Mr. Dehring noted that T & M Asphalt Paving and Best Asphalt submitted the 2 lowest bids. One major difference in staff's review and decision making was the timeline for completion in their proposals. T & M Asphalt Paving submitted the lowest cost bid; however their proposal timeline indicated a Spring 2022 start date for the Recreation Center parking lot expansion and pathway reconstruction work, with an anticipated completion date of June–July 2022. Best Asphalt's bid was roughly \$73,000 more than the T&M bid, however their proposal states that they can complete all three projects in Fall 2021, which would be less disruptive to patrons. Currently, the Recreation Center is still experiencing a reduction in patron visits and staff feels that it would be prudent to take advantage of this limited traffic volume since that parking expansion will impact traffic flow.

Mr. Ezekiel asked if there would be bike parking included. Mr. Dehring responded that there would be new covered bike parking installed and the Rec Center.

Ms. McCollum asked how many new parking spaces will be added at the Rec Center. Mr. Dehring answered that 18 new spaces will be constructed.

Mr. Pratt asked if it was consistent with policy to go with the second lowest bid when appropriate. Mr. Dehring responded that it was consistent with our policy and that it was mentioned in the RFP that the construction schedule would be considered.

It was moved by Ms. McCollum and seconded by Mr. Joerg that the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission award a Service Contract in the amount of \$629,093.50 to Best Asphalt, Inc. from Romulus, MI for the Parking Lot and Pathway Paving Projects at Nelson Meade County Farm Park and the Meri Lou Murray Recreation Center (RFP #8129) and include an additional 10% (\$62,900) contingency for potential contract change orders. 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McKinney), the motion was approved.

B. B2B – Barton/Bandemer Tunnel Project Agreement

Mr. Sanderson explained that in 2020, the Commission and the City of Ann Arbor completed an engineering feasibility study regarding a pedestrian underpass of the MDOT/Amtrak railroad between Barton Nature Area and Bandemer Park on Ann Arbor's northwest side. The study also included a 0.6-mile extension of the Border to Border Trail (B2B Trail) through Barton Nature Area as part of the larger Dexter-Ann Arbor connection project.

Public support for the project is strong as was demonstrated during several public engagement sessions and meetings of the City's Parks Advisory Commission (PAC) held through the planning process. Ultimately, PAC approved a resolution in December 2020 in support of the project and authorizing paving within Barton Nature Area for the B2B Trail conditional upon fully funding the tunnel project.

Mr. Sanderson noted that since obtaining PAC's approval of the project, and based on a 2018 Letter of Intent, City and Commission staff prepared a project agreement between the City and County to advance the

Barton-Bandemer Tunnel and Trail project into engineering and construction. The agreement is currently under final review by the City attorney's office, but the key roles and responsibilities are as follows:

1. Washtenaw County Parks will hire a firm and manage the engineering contract to secure all required permits, approvals, and detailed design. This work will be coordinated with City staff, who will ultimately approve the plans prior to construction.
2. Once plans are complete, the project will be bid through the City's bidding process. The construction process will be managed by the City and a third-party engineer. Commission staff will remain engaged during construction due to the proposed financial interest in the project.
3. The City will own and operate the project upon project completion.

Funding for the tunnel and trail is as follows (spread through FY 2021-2023) and this project was budgeted for and identified as a priority during the renewal of the Road and Trails Millage in 2020:

\$1,375,000 - City of Ann Arbor

\$3,375,000 - WCPARC *split evenly with the Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative (HWPI).

\$4,750,000 Total (construction, permitting, and engineering)

Mr. Ezekiel thanked staff for bringing this important project forward for approval. He added that the current situation is very unsafe as dozens of pedestrians are using a very difficult illegal crossing of the RR tracks.

Mr. Marans asked if the trail on the west side of the tunnel would be part of the same construction phase as the tunnel. Mr. Sanderson replied that the trail could be contracted separately to allow more flexibility. He added that the trail is conditioned upon getting the funding lined up for the tunnel project.

It was moved by Mr. Ezekiel and seconded by Mr. Marans that the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission authorize staff to execute the project agreement with the City of Ann Arbor, conditional upon final acceptance by legal counsel, for the Barton to Bandemer Tunnel and Trail Project. 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McKinney), the motion was approved.

C. Karnatz Farm Final Approval

Ms. Pahl-Donaldson presented the Selter / Karnatz Farm property, located in Augusta Township, and explained that it was nominated to NAPP and reviewed by the Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Committee as part of the Round 18 nominations. At the time, the property was identified as a priority for the purchase of a conservation easement based on review of all the applications received in Round 18. It was also agreed that it was a prime candidate for receiving federal funding through the USDA Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) via the Greenbelt's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) area. In February 2019, WCPARC submitted an ACEP application for the farm, the award for which the Commission accepted in August 2019. The Commission authorized a sales contract in December 2019.

Assessment & Prioritization mapping assessed the property at lower qualities and did not prioritize. The Commission's scoring system gives this project 73/100 points. This will be NAPP's first acquisition of any type in Augusta Township. It will also be Augusta Township's land preservation program's first easement to which they contributed.

Ms. Pahl-Donaldson explained that an appraisal of the property was completed in October 2019 and the conservation easement value was determined to be \$296,000, or roughly \$2,503 an acre for 118.26 acres. The final FMV and payments have been adjusted by the exact surveyed acres. ALPAC

recommended to pursue the purchase of the property at their November 2019 meeting. An ACEP-ALE grant was awarded for this property,

It was moved by Ms. McCollum and seconded by Mr. Joerg to authorize the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission purchase of a conservation easement on the Selter/Karnatz Farm property in Augusta Township in the amount of \$295,249, contingent upon attorney approval of final documents. I further recommend that \$15,000 be contributed to the stewardship special revenue fund for the future monitoring and enforcement of the conservation easement. 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McKinney), the motion was approved.

D. Kaiser Property Final Approval

Ms. Leikam presented the 33-acre Kaiser Trust property and explained that it was nominated to NAPP as part of Round 20. The property has frontage on Silver Lake and is adjacent to Pinckney State Recreation Area. The property in its entirety is 193 acres and straddles the Washtenaw County and Livingston County boundaries. NATAC evaluated the property as part of Round 20 and designated it as a Tier 1 priority for acquisition. The highlight of this property is lake frontage on Silver Lake and adjacency to the Pinckney State Recreation Area. The property has been identified by the Department of Natural Resources as a desirable addition to the Pinckney State Recreation Area. The property owner recently died and the heirs to the trust have listed the property for sale and are interested in selling the property in its entirety as one transaction.

Since a portion of the property is located in Livingston county, The Conservation Fund will purchase the Livingston County portion simultaneously with the Washtenaw County portion. WCPARC will provide the funding for the Washtenaw County portion. The entire property will later be transferred to DNR who will own and manage the entire property as an addition to the Pinckney State Recreation Area.

Ms. Leikam explained that an appraisal for the property was completed by Affinity Valuation Group in March 2021, which determined the value of the Washtenaw County portion to be \$336,000 for the 33-acre parcel. NATAC recommended to move forward with the acquisition of this property at their April 5, 2021 meeting.

It was moved by Ms. Bobrin and seconded by Mr. Marans that the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission authorize the purchase of the Kaiser Trust property in the amount of \$336,000 in collaboration with The Conservation Fund and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McKinney), the motion was approved.

E. NAPP – Hamilton Conservation Easement Update

Ms. Pahl-Donaldson gave an update on the Hamilton property and explained that was presented to the Commission in December 2020 with 2 building envelopes each about 3 acres in size allowing agricultural buildings only. As the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt advanced its discussions with the landowners, the landowners expressed need for an additional agricultural building envelope and a re-siting of a previously approved one based on the ultimate division of property ownership within the family. In total, there will be 3 agricultural building envelopes, each no larger than 2 acres.

The Agricultural Lands Preservation Advisory Committee (ALPAC) and the Natural Areas Technical Advisory Committee (NATAC) were both made aware of this change and expressed no concerns. Staff consider the changes appropriate with minimal impact on the overall conservation purpose of the project.

Mr. Ezekiel thanked staff for bringing this item back to the Commission to reconfirm the approval after a change had been made to the application. He said that modification to the application is reasonable and that he is still supportive of approving the conservation easement

It was moved by Mr. Ezekiel and seconded by Mr. Morgan that the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission continues to partner with the City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt for the purchase of a conservation easement on the Hamilton property in Salem Township. 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McKinney), the motion was approved.

F. Other Old Business

None.

8. New Business

A. Highland Preserve Boardwalk RFP

Ms. Krueger reported that the 53-acre Janice Anschuetz Highland Preserve, located along Clark Road in Superior Township, was purchased through NAPP in 2017. A five-car parking lot and public entrance to the preserve will be constructed as part of a utility project on land managed by Superior Township along Clark Road. The public entrance is expected to be completed by winter 2021 or spring 2022. NAPP is also currently working on the acquisition of a portion of the Highland Cemetery which will provide additional trail connectivity to the south. The first step in realizing that connection to the Superior Greenway will be developing a hiking trail from the public entrance on Clark Road. The trail will travel north from the parking area and will cross a county drain and a high-quality floodplain forest.

Staff worked with ROWE Engineering to develop construction drawings for the project. The design now includes a 1500' gravel pathway that connects to a 300' boardwalk. ROWE provided a cost opinion for construction that estimated at \$293,911. Staff is requesting the release of an RFP for the boardwalk construction. Once bids are received, the contract approval and final budget will be brought back to the Commission in the fall of this year.

It was moved by Mr. Marans and seconded by Ms. McCollum to authorize staff to finalize design plans with ROWE Engineering and release an RFP for the construction of this path and boardwalk for final approval by the Parks Commission for award of contract and final project budget. 9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent (McKinney), the motion was approved.

B. Other New Business

None.

9. Commissioners/Directors Comments

Mr. Vaughn reported that WCPARC holds a first right of refusal on the property adjacent to the Spike preserve now owned by the Grass Lake Sanctuary. He added that the group has been a great neighbor and now they are intending to sell to another group with a very similar mission. Unless there is objection, we intend not to exercise our option to purchase the property. No objections were raised.

Ms. Scriber voiced her support for all the staff that presented their projects today. Mr. Pratt seconded the comment.

Mr. Pratt gave a big congratulations to Augusta Township for their first acquisition of a conservation easement under their land preservation program. Adding, that it is great to be partner with them.

10. Adjournment

It was moved by Mr. Marans and seconded by Mr. Morgan to adjourn the meeting. All ayes.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:22 p.m.