

Leelanau County Parks and Recreation Commission

Regular Session – Wednesday, May 3, 2023, 3:15 p.m.

Tentative Minutes – Meeting Recorded

Leelanau County Government Center, Suttons Bay, Michigan

<https://www.leelanau.gov/meetingdetails.asp?MAId=2516>

The meeting of the Leelanau County Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chairman Casey Noonan at 3:15 p.m.

Chairman Noonan led the recitation of the “Pledge of Allegiance.”

Roll Call:

John Arens
Dave Barrons, *Vice-Chairman*
Steve Christensen
Don Frerichs
Charles Godbout
Melinda Lautner
Casey Noonan, *Chairman*
John Popa
Kama Ross
F. Jon Walter

Staff Present: W. Scott Bradley, Maintenance Worker

Guests Present:

- Heather Hettinger, Biologist, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Alan Campbell, Chairman, Lake Leelanau Lake Association (LLLA) Kids’ Fishing Day Committee
- Laurel Voran and Emma Stafford of Laurel Voran, LLC

Public Comment:

None.

Agenda Additions/Deletions:

Christensen requested the topic, “Experimental Planting of Giant Sequoia,” be added to the Veronica Valley report. Noonan requested to be added to the Myles Kimmerly Park report a brief discussion about a possible ice-skating rink.

Motion by Lautner to approve the agenda, as amended. Seconded by Popa.

Discussion – None.

Ayes – 10 (Lautner, Noonan, Popa, Ross, Walter, Arens, Barrons, Christensen, Frerichs, Godbout)

No – 0

Motion Passes.

Action Items –

Veronica Valley Pond Fish Report, Heather Hettinger, DNR Fisheries Biologist:

Hettinger reported that after calling other fish suppliers in Michigan, Laggis' Fish Farm was again selected as the fish supplier for 2023 with the best price and "the highest quality fish." Hettinger said that though there was a price increase this year, Dan (Laggis) "gives us more than we pay for." She said last year there was a nominal increase that was inconsistent with inflation because Laggis wanted to support and encourage the continuation of the Kids' Fishing Day event post-pandemic; however, Laggis did not anticipate costs to skyrocket as they did this year, resulting in a total increase in price of \$2,966.00, including fish and delivery. She added that an option to reduce the cost would be to purchase fewer fish.

Bradley inquired about stocking trout. Hettinger said the pond at Veronica Valley Park is too warm for trout to thrive, though brown trout tend to have a higher tolerance for a warmer water temperature, so Hettinger said she would try to nab some from the retired brood stock (fish retired from spawning, typically 3- to 5-years-old) if they become available.

Hettinger said that approximately 2,000 fish will be purchased by the County, with the Lake Leelanau Lake Association (LLA) purchasing an additional 1,500 fish, bringing the total of restocked fish to 3,500, not including the extra fish Laggis gratuitously adds in (200-300 more).

Motion by Popa to recommend to the County Board of Commissioners to approve the purchase of fish for the Veronica Valley Park ponds from Laggis' Fish Farms, Inc., of Gobles, Michigan, in an amount not to exceed \$7,332.00; funds to come from #101.850.756.727.000. Seconded by Christensen.

Discussion – Barrons noted that \$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00 could be used to offset the increase in cost for the fish from monies saved by not pursuing professional chemical treatment of the ponds this year.

Ayes – 10 (Popa, Ross, Walter, Arens, Barrons, Christensen, Frerichs, Godbout, Lautner, Noonan)

No – 0

Motion Passes.

Popa questioned Hettinger as to whether the pond at Veronica Valley Park should be deepened. Hettinger responded that it should not, as it would "open a Pandora's Box" requiring sediment testing, and a plan for dewatering and soils disposal. She said if it's not broke, don't fix it.

Campbell expressed appreciation for the County's support of the Kids' Fishing Day event, adding that because of donations from Cherryland Electric, the Grand Traverse Band and others, their portion of the fish restocking purchase will be covered despite the increase in cost.

Christensen thanked Hettinger for her expertise and interest in the pond at Veronica Valley and for her efforts in procuring quality fish at the best price. Christensen asked Hettinger to speak to the balance of the pond for the new members to the Commission.

Hettinger responded that every couple of years, with assistance from the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, a netting survey is conducted of fish in the pond. She said that white sucker and yellow perch act as the forage species. Large-mouth bass are stocked a few times a year and are predators that help to maintain the balance of pan fish (blue gills) by eating sick or injured ones. She said that if the bass population dwindles, which is indicated by fewer catches and fewer sightings in the pond, more will be added. Popa asked if minnows should be added to the pond. Hettinger responded that there are a number of lakes that added fathead minnows and, when fishing those lakes, she catches “piles of forage fish,” so her confidence in adding fathead minnows is not great. Popa asked about stocking shiners, but Hettinger discouraged that option as well, saying shiners are strong vectors for disease.

Campbell highly encouraged development of UA (Universal Access) on the trails throughout Veronica Valley Park. Barrons responded that the Committee is aware of the resources they have and the value it could be to the disabled community. He added that they will continue to move in that direction for future planning and that they he will look to Campbell for publicity.

Motion by Lautner to recommend to the County Board of Commissioners to approve the purchase of fish from the Lake Leelanau Lake Association’s Kids’ Fishing Day Committee in the amount of \$500.00. Seconded by Barrons.

Discussion – None.

Ayes – 10 (Lautner, Noonan, Popa, Ross, Walter, Arens, Barrons, Christensen, Frerichs, Godbout)

No – 0

Motion Passes.

Approval of Minutes – April 5, 2023, Regular Session:

Motion by Barrons to approve the Regular Session minutes of April 5, 2023, as presented. Seconded by Popa.

Discussion – None.

Ayes – 10 (Barrons, Christensen, Frerichs, Godbout, Lautner, Noonan, Popa, Ross, Walter, Arens)

No – 0

Motion Passes.

Approval of Financials:

- Transaction History Listing Report – April 1, 2023 Thru April 30, 2023
- Revenue & Expense Report - Period Ending April 30, 2023

Motion by Godbout to approve the financials, as presented. Seconded by Lautner.

Discussion – Bradley reported expenditures at 7.5 percent of budget. Godbout expressed appreciation for receiving the reports prior to the meeting.

Ayes – 10 (Godbout, Lautner, Noonan, Popa, Ross, Walter, Arens, Barrons, Christensen, Frerichs)

No – 0

Motion Passes.

Laurel Voran Invoice – Monkeyflower Upkeep:

Voran explained that the Monkeyflower is an endangered flower that thrives in streams and that there are only 21 occurrences in the world. She added that it naturally occurs in Michigan. It blooms in June, with a canary yellow flower and forms a mat along shorelines. Given the right conditions and care, it will thrive, but she said other plants overtake it, and that is where they provide service. They remove competing plants and transplant new growth along the shoreline. Voran noted online educational resources including a video by a local videographer and more in-depth information provided by Michigan Natural Features Inventory – <https://naturechange.org/2021/12/15/hope-for-michigans-most-endangered-flower/>. Emma Stafford discussed the thriving monkeyflower plantings at Old Settlers’ Park near the observation deck where the public can see it up close.

Voran offered a proposal for 2023 of \$960.00 to continue preservation of the monkeyflower at Old Settlers’ Park including weeding, collecting debris and hauling it away, continued mitigation of invasive species, and seeking new areas for transplants.

Motion by Popa to accept the proposal from Laurel Voran, LLC, to continue work with Old Settlers’ Park Monkeyflower preservation in an amount not to exceed \$960.00. Seconded by Christensen.

Discussion – Popa thanked Voran and added that he supports her efforts. Voran recounted the story of monkeyflower mistakenly being served as garnish at La Becassé Restaurant in Glen Arbor, Michigan, until a patron who was a botanist pointed out it was not watercress as they thought. Discussion ensued. Godbout advised that when power washing the observation platform, to be careful not to get the runoff into the monkeyflower beds.

**Ayes – 10 (Popa, Ross, Walter, Arens, Barrons, Christensen, Frerichs, Godbout, Lautner, Noonan)
No – 0
Motion Passes.**

Parks Photos:

Christensen reminded the group that new fall photos would be appreciated for creating next year’s advertising of the parks in the *Leelanau Enterprise*. He added that the photos should be forwarded to Executive Assistant Laurel Evans.

Parks Administrative Assistant:

Motion by Christensen to recommend to the Leelanau County Board of Commissioners to retain a Parks administrative assistant. Seconded by Lautner.

Discussion – Christensen said he felt the group should be supportive of “the concept” of an administrative assistant for the Parks and Recreation Commission. He added that all Parks money was spent last year and the Commission and the Committees as a whole are functioning at a high level which speaks to the important contributions made by the administrative assistant; however, several questions remained unanswered such as Evans’ future involvement and how the position would be budgeted. Noonan suggested holding this topic for the next meeting when Evans was in attendance.

Christensen withdrew the motion.

Committee Reports and Recommendations –

Myles Kimmerly Park Committee:

Frerichs reported on the Committee's April 27, 2023, meeting where preliminary findings for the park were reviewed in preparation for the update of the master plan with assistance from Gosling Czubak Engineering Services, Inc. He added that the Committee will conduct an off-site meeting at the park with Gosling on May 17, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. The top three priorities for the park include constructing a paved loop trail, construction of a new kiosk, and the addition of pickleball courts. The construction of a dog park was an honorable mention. Whether to keep or remove the driving range was still in question.

(4:08 p.m. – Lautner temporarily left the meeting to take a call.)

Also discussed was siting the portable toilets in a more central location. Frerichs added that the master plan will cost \$4,700.00 and has been approved by the Board of Commissioners. Chairman Noonan confirmed this cost will be charged to the Parks budget.

Discussion ensued on the parks posting for the upcoming May 17, 2023, Myles Kimmerly Park Committee Meeting, to be held at the Government Center and onsite at the park. Barrons reminded the group about a discussion at the November (2022) meeting regarding permanently posting a QR (Quick Response) code at each of the parks to gather continual input from the public about enhancements to the parks. Frerichs said he would follow up with Evans regarding posting (a future conceptual plan) public input meeting.

Noonan reported that Dan May (works with the Grand Traverse Band and the ice rink in Northport) approached him about constructing a removable ice-skating rink at Myles Kimmerly Park. May lives about a mile from Myles Kimmerly Park. Noonan told May the County does not have the money or the manpower to support an ice rink. Bradley commented that the water source is winterized and it would mean more plowing that he would have to do to clear for parking. Noonan said he brought the request to the Parks Commission to determine if there was enough support to make it worth May's time to prepare a proposal. Noonan said he made it clear that all maintenance and care would be up to May. Popa said he first talked with May before he referred May to Noonan. Popa said he supports the endeavor and that May understands he would have to do the plowing and even mentioned tanking in the water for the rink. With support by the group, Noonan said he would contact May and invite him to present his proposal to the Parks Commission.

(4:19 p.m. – Lautner rejoined the meeting.)

Old Settlers' Park Committee:

Godbout reported on the Old Settlers' Park, 1:00 p.m., on-site Committee meeting held prior to today's Parks Commission's Regular Session. He said in this year's budget there is money for improved parking along the interior park road using gravel and grading. On the north side of the park, portable toilets were sited. They also determined placement of both the playground

bouncer (near the playground) and the stone bench (near the chapel) from donations by the Lanham family.

Glen Lake Community Reformed Church Event Request: Godbout addressed the request from the Glen Lake Community Church Men’s Group to host a concert on either July 8, 14, or 15 (2023) at Old Settlers Park. Godbout said he advised the group that park use is available on a first-come, first-served with regard to use of the gazebo.

Motion by Godbout to approve use of Old Settlers Park on July 8, 14, or 15 by the Glen Lake Community Reformed Church Men’s Group to host a concert on one of those three dates, pending all insurance requirements are met. Seconded by Christensen.

Discussion – None.

Ayes – 10 (Godbout, Lautner, Noonan, Popa, Ross, Walter, Arens, Barrons, Christensen, Frerichs)

No – 0

Motion Passes.

Veronica Valley Park Committee:

Christensen reported that Lynn Baker (“who’s on the board for the district”) proposed planting three, Giant Sequoia trees at Veronica Valley Park as an experimental exception in plantings and as an opportunity for the public to watch them grow and thrive. Ross commented that Manistee has the largest grove of Sequoias in Michigan, and east of the Mississippi River. She added that the Ruby Allen Farm has one that is doing well. **Consensus of Commission to support the planting.**

GTB Two Percent Allocation Request, Invasive Species Mitigation, YouthWorks. Barrons reported that the Committee will be applying for a two percent allocation for a third time (the first two were denied) to the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians for use of goats at the park for remediation of invasive species.

Barrons reported that the Committee is continuing to develop park amenities for the disabled, including a UA trail around the fishing pond and over the bridge, which would be Phase I, and completed by applying in November for another two percent allocation. Phase II would be a UA trail on the other side of the bridge to form a loop. The dam between the upper and lower ponds would have a bridge connecting the trails. Barrons said the next step is for Commissioner Walter to provide drawings of park baselines and to develop a plan from there that includes a pad for portable toilets, one for a UA stall. Low maintenance privacy screening will be added around the toilet area. Barrons said paving of the parking lot may not happen for years, but a plan needs to be in place to document their vision for the park.

Public Comment:

None.

Commissioner Comments:

None.

Chairperson Comments:

None.

Adjournment:

With no further business to come before the Commission, Chairman Noonan called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Christensen to adjourn. Seconded by Walter.

The meeting adjourned to the call of the Chairman at 4:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Lori Eubanks, Recording Secretary