

**Leelanau County Parks and Recreation Commission
Veronica Valley Park Committee**

Wednesday, March 15, 2021 – 1:00 p.m.

Via Zoom and at the Leelanau County Government Center, Suttons Bay, Michigan

Tentative Minutes – Meeting Recorded

<https://www.leelanau.gov/meetingdetails.asp?MAId=2105>

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chairman Dave Barrons at 1:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America was by Committee Chairman Barrons.

Roll Call: Dave Barrons, *Committee Chairman*
Steve Christensen
F. Jon Walter
John Popa

Guest present.

Approval of Agenda and Late Additions/Deletions:

Committee Chairman Barrons asked that Action Items #4 and #7 be moved up as #1 and #2.

Motion by Christensen to accept the agenda amended. Seconded by Popa.

Discussion – none.

Ayes – 4 (Christensen, Popa, Walter, Barrons)

No – 0

Motion Carried.

Public Comment:

The Clerk provided the number to call in for public comment – no comment received.

Action Items –

Donation Policy:

Committee Chairman Barrons said the Kids Fishing Committee of the Lake Leelanau Lake Association wishes to place a commemorative bench honoring the late Pete Taylor on the bank of the kids fishing pond at the park. At the last meeting, the minutes show a suggestion had been made to discuss the issue with County Administrator Chet Janik relative to the County Board donation policy. Janik had noted donations to the County are considered on a case-by-case basis (by a separate Commissioner Committee). We will need to have the placement of this bench approved by the full Board of Commissioners. There is no policy, due to a legal opinion from Counsel.

Motion by Christensen to recommend to the Parks and Recreation Commission to accept the donation of a bench at Veronica Valley Park from the Lake Leelanau Lake Association, in honor of Pete Taylor. Seconded by Popa.

Discussion – none.

Ayes – 4 (Christensen, Popa, Walter, Barrons)

No – 0

Recommendation Passes.

To be added to the full Parks Commission Regular Session agenda for Wednesday, March 17, 2021.

Grand Traverse Band 2% Allocation Application, First Cycle, 2021 –

Bill Watson, YouthWork Director, Invasive Species Eradication Proposal Review:

Committee Chairman Barrons said Watson wants to submit another Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians 2% allocation application through Parks and Recreation for invasive species removal at Veronica Valley Park. (If approved, the funds would) pay for some of the crew, and the “City Girls Farm”, which earns money by farming out their goats; they set up the paddocks, and move the goats throughout the park as indicated, for invasive species removal. The goats eat knapweed, autumn olive, buckthorn, and other weeds. Watson will put together the documentation. He has a solid reputation with the Tribe. Barrons said he will be conversing with Watson more on the subject and bring it to the next session. Discussion followed on deadlines.

Motion by Christensen to recommend to the Parks and Recreation Commission to move forward with allowing YouthWork Director Bill Watson write an application for a Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians 2% allocation request on behalf of Child and Family Services, for the eradication of invasive species at Veronica Valley Park. Seconded by Popa.

Discussion ensued on specifics, including the amount requested and dates. Committee Chairman Barrons to follow up with Watson; to be added to the next Committee meeting agenda.

Ayes – 4 (Christensen, Popa, Walter, Barrons)

No – 0

Recommendation Passes.

Approval of January 15, 2021, Minutes:

Motion by Popa to approve the minutes of January 15, 2021, as presented. Seconded by Barrons.

Discussion – none.

Ayes – 4 (Popa, Walter, Barrons, Christensen)

No – 0

Motion Carried.

Approval of February 11, 2021, Minutes:

Motion by Popa to approve the minutes of February 11, 2021, as presented. Seconded by Barrons.

Discussion – none.

Ayes – 4 (Popa, Walter, Barrons, Christensen)

No – 0

Motion Carried.

Committee Chairman Barrons asked and Evans responded a temporary office assistant position bump in pay had been approved by the County Board, and the posting will be scheduled soon.

Schools Park Usage:

Christensen said Eastern Elementary fifth grade Science Teacher Tom Cooper, of the Traverse City Area Public Schools (TCAPS), would love to use the park as an outdoor science lab. Cooper had stated in his email he has taken his children to Veronica Valley to fish. He wants to expand that into a “science lab”, and conduct field trips on a regular basis. Christensen commented this is a perfect use for what this Park is there for; a lot of Leelanau County kids attend TCAPS schools. We do not have Leelanau County schools making this same request. We have always pitched Veronica Valley Park as a “regional” park. Christensen said Cooper has also asked about the timing of trips. Committee Chairman Barrons said he can follow up on the timing. Barrons asked Christensen, has the Conservation District scheduled or conducted a fifth-grade outdoor day? Christensen responded with Covid, no, and deferred any questions to Conservation District Director Buzz Long for the answer. Discussion ensued. Popa remarked we do not really have action to take – keep us informed. Committee Chairman Barrons remarked it’s a wonderful thing; it is what the park is for. Barrons to follow up with Cooper.

Proposed Park Rules Revisions:

Christensen said we had run into a situation, where a park user was walking his dog off leash at the park, which is against Park rules. The Animal Control (AC) Deputy, Wayne Kalchik, issued the person a ticket. Kalchik later revoked the ticket, because he found out he did not have standing due to State law. If you are on a piece of property open to hunting, and declare you are hunting, your dog does not have to be on leash, you do not have to have a license, or wear orange, or have a weapon; you just have to declare you are hunting. The State is extraordinarily flexible if you have declared you are hunting.

Christensen said he drafted a short statement of the facts, which was then forwarded on to Administration to send on to corporate counsel. He remarked it had always been his understanding that was the intent, to allow hunting within the park. Within that grant (agreement between Leelanau County and the State), there is no statement that the park has to be or was intended to be used for hunting. Counsel then reviewed the grant application, and although there is a line with a check box for hunting, the box was unchecked on the application. Neither the application or the grant agreement mentions hunting. Christensen continued; the question then becomes what to do. He got back with Kalchik, and also called former parks member Greg Julian, who had accompanied Christensen on the visit to the DNR to pitch the grant. Christensen said both he and Julian distinctly recall hunting was meant to be included; it was just never added to the (application and subsequent agreement). More comments followed. Christensen said Julian wasn’t excited to hear that, as he is an active hunter. Julian spends lots of time advocating for hunting. Christensen said he thinks Julian would be okay if we “limited” the hunting somewhat. More comments followed. Evans suggested any further questions of limiting hunting should go through Counsel.

Committee Chairman Barrons asked are we allowed to delineate a hunting area within this park? Popa said we shouldn't even be talking about an area. He questioned if there were any deed restrictions. Popa noted he has friends that work bird dogs in that park. Christensen said for general consumption, the real issue is a safety issue; we have people that have complained to the AC officer and it has become a safety issue. We need to review how the park is used. To limit the (use of hunting) to a smaller area of the park may be the way to go. Barrons said either we close the whole park (to hunting), or we do not change at all. Christensen said when counsel comes back, we will have some direction as to where this goes. Barrons said his opinion is to split the park. Evans to follow up, and forward the Counsel's statement to all members. Popa said he wants to see the original deed. Barrons said as part of the application, the deed should be part of that. Discussion followed.

Parking Lot – Lot Redesign, Entrance Culvert Replacement:

Popa asked if everyone received a copy of Walter's renderings (https://www.leelanau.gov/downloads/vvp_entrance_upgrade_draft_c_03152021.pdf), and then reviewed it with the group. Popa said this rendering has 25 parking spots with the overflow. We are looking at adding this to the 2022 Parks budget. This doesn't have to be the final design; however, it is a pretty good estimate of what it will look like. If we need a parking lot, this is what it should look like and it fits our plan. Popa continued his review of the document. He said the Leelanau County Road Commission Engineer doesn't recommend plantings as noted in the middle (of the entrance). Popa continued to review the document with suggested revisions. He and Walter both sought a few quotes to come up with an estimate of expenses for the project. Evans asked for clarification, that the quotes were obtained in order to develop a scope of service for the project. Popa affirmed, he was just getting estimates.

Popa said he would like to propose this to the full Commission for next year's (budget). More comments followed on potential changes to the parking lot. Christensen remarked on the overflow parking; we will probably leave some of that gravel in place, so the overflow is reinforced. Popa said that's a good point, we just don't want people parking there all the time. Walter cautioned we don't want to impinge on the turning radius of the buses. Are the 18 parking spaces on the paved area adequate for most uses? Popa affirmed. Bradley noted there are two times during the year when there is not enough parking. Barrons remarked we do have designated overflow parking in two other places. Christensen said there is a possibility we won't skim too much gravel out. That is an amazing overflow and it is already supported. We could put up cones across that area for most of the year, so people do not park there. Popa suggested barricade fencing. Discussion followed on plow patterns, Port-a-potty use, asphalt and striping, and poured pads.

Christensen said he knows we will have a better area for the Port-a-potties. When we think about how winter use impacts their use, we should consider a "portable" Port-a-potty. Walter remarked at one time, the Port-a-potties were at the end of the drive, which isn't as nice in appearance. We have discussed moving them around the side. Committee Chairman Barrons said the potties are used throughout the winter, so we want the availability. This is great work.

Christensen affirmed, “Nicely done.” Barrons said we are in a position of asking the full Commission for permission to keep moving forward.

Popa asked if a motion is needed. Barrons remarked he will be reporting on the status to the full Commission. Christensen said we are at the point that we do not know an estimate of cost. Popa said relative to the culvert, he had talked with Road Commission staff and the Road Commission’s attorney, that defines the law that lets road commissions do work for public entities. He would like to go to the full Parks Commission and suggest that an agreement could be written by the County. Popa continued to describe the state of repair with the culvert. Barrons asked if the Road Commission had given Popa any idea on cost. Discussion ensued, with Popa relaying the personnel and equipment needed to complete the work. Walter said he had been quoted it would cost approximately \$50.00/foot, for an approximate 110-foot culvert. Popa continued to comment on potential costs. Discussion ensued. Evans stated a dollar figure will need to be determined prior to any request being forwarded to the County Board of Commissioners.

Motion by Christensen to recommend to the Parks and Recreation Commission to move forward on entering into an agreement with the County Road Commission to replace the main entrance culvert at Veronica Valley Park at a cost not to exceed “X” (cost to be determined). Seconded by Barrons.

Discussion – Evans stressed this cannot go before County Commissioners until a cost has been determined; Popa to follow up with the Road Commission.

Ayes – 4 (Christensen, Popa, Walter, Barrons)

No – 0

Recommendation Passes.

Popa quoted from MCL (Michigan Compiled Laws) 45.85 relative to intergovernmental agreement rules. Committee Chairman Barrons said we will take this to the full Commission, once we know that number. He also noted that after the culvert gets replaced, he would like to “toy around” to get the front entryway done with curbs and paving yet this year. Discussion ensued. Popa said he wants to bring this up at the next Regular Session of the Parks and Recreation Commission, to get bids to do the entryway. Christensen noted the bid opening (for the debris cleanup at Myles Kimmerly Park) is in April.

Administrator Janik was present. Evans read back the draft motion just passed for the culvert. Janik confirmed a cost estimate is needed prior to going before the County Board. Committee Chairman Barrons said at this point, they are only seeking approval from the Parks and Recreation Commission. Janik said you might not need the estimate for the Parks Board, but you will for the County Board of Commissioners. Christensen said if Walter or Popa speak with the Road Commission, they should get something in writing from them. Popa asked and Janik responded the County Board has the right to go out for bids or waive its policy on bid requirements on anything.

Janik also relayed to Committee members the upcoming changes to the Open Meetings Act (OMA), which as of April 1, include:

- All Commission (or Committee) members must be present in person for any meetings, unless they meet one of the three requirements –
 - Military exemption
 - Health reasons
 - The member is a health care provider for someone

Members of any board or commission can no longer just state they wish to participate remotely and the majority of members need to be physically present. You do not have to broadcast the meeting on YouTube; however, if you have more audience members than what are legally allowed, you have to have a plan as to where to put them so they can view the meeting. The Government Center has that ability, as a PolyCom has been installed in the community meeting room located in the lower level. We currently allow 25 total persons total to a large meeting room. Discussion ensued.

Discussion ensued on the parking lot materials. Committee Chairman Barrons asked Popa, what you are saying is it wouldn't be too early to (complete the culvert project) this year, that you (don't think it will) cost... Popa said we could get it done, but we would need to get \$15,000.00. Discussion followed on splitting up the project into segments. Walter remarked he had worked with a contact at Elmer's, who noted we could break up the entrance project into separate parts, and there might be an option to eliminate curbing.

Revised Drawings of Shoreline Fishing Surface:

Walter reviewed the draft shoreline proposal (https://www.leelanau.gov/downloads/vvpc_draft_renderings_03152021.pdf). Walter said his interest is partially from the perspective of a grandparent, for the general safety of kids on water. He stated there is 5,000 feet of shoreline within this park. To increase the enjoyment of fishing, the drawings show an objective to create a flat fishing area for children to fish. He continued to review the draft with his proposal, outlining the added safety features. Committee Chairman Barrons asked and Walter responded he has not received estimates back on the project as proposed. Discussion followed on path materials, Universally Accessible (UA) requirements, the current pathway configurations, and wheelchair accessibility.

Walter pointed out that the current slope of the main bridge is within the ADA range, so the bridge itself can serve as a handicap fishing area; you still have to get to it, so that is a problem. Christensen said the ultimate goal will be for an ADA visitor to be able to exit their vehicle in the parking lot and take their wheelchair down to the water, and it will be UA the entire way. If we do not do UA the whole way, we will reduce our ability to obtain future grants. Committee Chairman Barrons said when we go out for grants, the extra leg that Walter doesn't have in his drawing from the parking lot to both sides of the horseshoe, will have to be in the plan. We cannot go for any sort of grant funding for the "horseshoe only". The accessibility will have to be part of any initial grant work. If we are looking at costs, let's view the cost of having a UA

path down from the parking lot to each side of the horseshoe. Christensen commented on grant-eligible projects. Discussion followed. Barrons asked do we make the effort to go forward with some sort of grant for this project, or do we start working on this piecemeal and look for grant-support for work later on? He is not advocating we go for a grant. Popa relayed the history of this particular project, in eliminate the safety hazard at the fishing pond.

Popa said he had previously designed a lot of this and brought it before the Commission. It was designed to get rid of the safety hazard if kids fall off the edge. He outlined his previous proposal, which included railings and docks, which he later dropped. He continued to comment, adding he has some engineering numbers coming. He thinks we can complete this project for \$30,000.00. We need to get rid of the safety hazard, install stone, remove the hump, and prepare a picnic area. He commented unfavorably on guardrails and cement. If one or two people need (a UA fishing spot), let's give them a small spot to fish. We want to pursue and go ahead and place a nice barrier here. The renderings aren't (designed) for going out for bid.

Committee Chairman Barrons said he likes where we have landed ourselves on a five-foot wide packed surface around the horseshoe. We are headed in the right direction. Is there anything we can do this year? Christensen asked Popa, you have a ballpark coming? Walter and Popa both affirmed they each have figures coming. Christensen suggested adding this on the "middle burner" for the next committee meeting. This is exactly where we need to go. Discussion ensued on pathways materials.

Walter to follow up with Popa.

Public Comment:

Clerk announced the number to call in – none received.

Board Member Comment:

- Popa stated he is totally against banning hunting of any sort in any area in that park. Committee Chairman Barrons said we will have to have that debate at some time.

Motion by Christensen to adjourn. Seconded by Walter.

Ayes – 4 (Christensen, Popa, Walter, Barrons)

No – 0

Motion Carried.

Meeting adjourned to the call of the Chairman at 2:33 p.m.

Laurel S. Evans, Secretary Pro Tem