

**Leelanau County Parks and Recreation Commission**

**Veronica Valley Park Committee Meeting**

Monday, March 14, 2022 – 9:30 a.m.

Leelanau County Government Center, Suttons Bay, Michigan

*Tentative Minutes – Meeting Recorded*

<https://www.leelanau.gov/meetingdetails.asp?MAId=2319>

The Veronica Valley Park Committee meeting was called to order at 9:41 a.m. by Committee Chairman, Dave Barrons.

Chairman Barrons led the “Pledge of Allegiance.”

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

Staff Present: Laurel Evans, Executive Assistant  
W. Scott Bradley, Maintenance Worker

Guests Present:  
None.

Public Comment:  
None.

Approval of Agenda and Late Additions/Deletions:

**Motion by Walter to approve the agenda, as submitted. Seconded by Christensen.**

Discussion – None.

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

**No – 0**

**Motion Passes.**

Action/Update/Discussion Items –

Lake Leelanau St. Mary Request:

Chairman Barrons reported that he received a request from Nick Papes, head cross-country coach at St. Mary’s School in Lake Leelanau, proposing installation of permanent or temporary 5K trail markers at Veronica Valley Park. The markers would serve as a tribute to Samuel James Hearne, age 16, who passed away on May 26, 2020. Papes made the request on behalf of the James Hearne Memorial Fund.

Barrons stated that he was not in favor of the proposal because it did not align with park policy which supports planting trees or installing benches, as they have more aesthetic appeal and function. He added that he would support a document posted at the park kiosk showing the marked memorial trail. Bradley said he, too, was not in favor of adding more signage at the park. Evans explained that the approval process would be lengthy with a Committee recommendation going to the Parks Commission, as well as the Board of Commissioners (BOC) and, from there, it

would be passed to the Buildings and Ground Committee for review and potential recommendation back to the BOC. She felt it would be a tough sell to the BOC because the BOC does not like to set precedent and past comments from Buildings and Grounds Committee members discouraged the creation of “memorial gardens” on county grounds.

Barrons said he spoke in person with Papes and explained that though his request was valid and that he would present the proposal to the Veronica Valley Parks Committee for discussion, he advised him that it would be an uphill battle. Additionally, Barrons thought there might be restrictions included in the grant documents related to the purchase of Veronica Valley Park. Popa did not support permanent signage at the park, but suggested a letter be sent to Papes encouraging the purchase of a memorial bench in Hearne’s honor and trail signage posted on the day of the cross-country event rather than permanent signage installation.

**Motion by Popa to recommend to the Parks and Recreation Commission to respond by letter to Papes that the Veronica Valley Committee does not support permanent signage at the park, but would support a memorial bench and plaque and/or signage in Hearne’s honor posted along the trail on the day of the cross-country event. Seconded by Christensen.**

Discussion – Christensen noted that the idea of a bench and plaque had already gone through the approval process with a previous bench installation at Veronica Valley Park, so he said, a path has already been set. Discussion ensued regarding a memorial tree with a plaque and how plaques were posted at Myles Kimmerly and Old Settlers Parks. Barrons thought the Veronica Valley Committee or the Parks Commission had already created a policy for donations. Evans said there could be no formal donation policy separate from the BOC’s policy. Popa offered to change his motion to include the option for a tree with a plaque as a memorial; however, the group did not support that addition. Walter said he preferred to keep the option for a bench versus a plaque on a tree.

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

**No – 0**

**Motion Passes.**

Evans and Barrons to draft a letter for the Parks Commission to send to Papes in response to his request for memorial trail signage at Veronica Valley Park.

Approval of Minutes from February 7, 2022, Veronica Valley Committee Meeting:

Discussion ensued on correcting the vote totals from 3-0 to 4-0.

**Motion by Barrons to approve the February 7, 2022, meeting minutes, with corrections as noted by Christensen. Seconded by Christensen.**

Discussion – None.

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

**No – 0**

**Motion Passes.**

Parking Lot –

Design Review/Update:

Barrons reported that the excavation bid for the parking lot entrance was amended. (Exhibit D, bullet point #7 was revised to read, “New drive location to be determined within culvert ends.”) Popa proposed leaving the parking lot design open until the entrance was completed. Bradley noted that at this time, the center of the entrance is over the culvert, which corresponds to Popa’s design.

Entrance RFP Review of Bids:

Regarding bids received, Christensen commented that both Popp Excavating and Team Elmer’s were “solid” companies. (Team Elmer’s Bid – \$37,265.00; Popp Excavating Bid – \$28,086.50.)

**Motion by Christensen to recommend to the Parks and Recreation Commission to accept the bid from Popp Excavating for the Parking Lot Entrance project in the amount of \$28,086.50. Seconded by Walter.**

Discussion – Christensen said he approved Popp’s bid based on the lower cost. Popa agreed to accept the bid from Popp Excavating, though he was surprised at the amount. He said the bids (verbal) he got last summer (2021) were at \$15,000.00 to \$17,000.00. He said they budgeted \$20,000.00 for the project, so now they have to justify the overage to the BOC. He felt the bids were “inflated” because the contractors did not like the County’s bid process and because asphalt had increased; but he said they have to accept the bid from Popp Excavating because the project needs to get done. Evans commented on a third bidder who had contacted her the day before bids were due, who ultimately did not bid. Christensen said they have the money in the budget, but the higher cost will impact other projects. Popa noted no completion date was mentioned in Popp’s bid.

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

**No – 0**

**Motion Passes.**

FY 2022 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Review:

Evans asked the group to look at the CIP plan specific to the Parks and Recreation Commission (in their binders). Evans then suggested holding off on this topic until next month to give the group more time to review the plan. Christensen inquired if there was money in the CIP for a passive learning pavilion at Veronica Valley Park. Barrons responded that there was a reference to a pavilion, among other things. Evans said Planning/Community Development Director Trudy Galla recently sent an email soliciting for CIP projects. Christensen said he would like to forward drawings for a pavilion to Walter that were done by Gosling Czubak in 2010 so that Walter could refine them for the approval of the Committee. Christensen added that the concept of a passive learning center was specifically stated with the purchase of Veronica Valley. He added that a single-wide trailer left on the property that had been considered for a learning center was removed because it would have been too costly to bring it to ADA (American Disability Act) compliance. So now they needed to rethink the plan for buildings at Veronica Valley. Evans suggested reviewing page 42 of the 5-Year Plan as well as the master plan prepared by Gosling Czubak. She mentioned the Conservancy’s Arcadia Marsh as a good example of signage for a passive learning project.

Popa stated that he supports a pavilion over paving the Veronica Valley parking lot. He added that installing portable toilets would be the most cost-effective because they require less maintenance. Walter said he can draw anything, as long as the project is “defined” – the proposed use, how many will it accommodate, and the age group it will target. Popa mentioned the open-air pavilion at Herman Park in Suttons Bay as a good example of what could be constructed at Veronica Valley. Barrons questioned the need for a pavilion and how often it would be used considering that there are other pavilions in the County. Christensen said he supported the National Park concept for passive learning. He said he was not sold on a pavilion. Barrons said he likes the term “passive learning center” versus “pavilion,” but he was unsure if it should be a top priority. Barrons added that in past discussions with Gosling Czubak he understood that ADA compliance would require some sort of shaded structure. Bradley favored an open-air cover for four to five picnic tables to encourage picnicking at the park. Discussion ensued regarding the future plan of an open-air covering with portable toilets and an information board. Walter said he would be absent for the April meeting, but could have renderings prepared by the May meeting. Walter clarified with the group that two toilets was the vision for the design. Barrons emphasized that the details of the open-air pavilion needed to be updated in the CIP. Evans suggested using the term “learning center” versus pavilion. Walter suggested “open-air learning center” which was favored by the group. Popa reviewed an old list of projects (some completed, and some not) for Veronica Valley including a barrier-free toilet area, painting the bridge, grading the parking lot, adding a trail map and posted signs, installing additional playground equipment for children older than five years (Walter added this item based on his observations at Myles Kimmerly Park), and building a bridge at the spillway between the duck pond and the kids’ pond. He concluded that, of all the projects listed, toilets and the open-air structure were his priorities. Barrons concurred. Popa noted that “the sign” at Veronica Valley Park will need to be reinstalled, but will have to wait until after the entrance is completed.

Barrons inquired when the Popp excavation project would commence. Popa responded that a start date was not provided, but that the project would be done by October (2022). Bradley confirmed that Popp Excavating had said they would work around the annual Kids’ Fishing Day at the park. Barrons inquired and Evans responded that pending County Board approval, Popp Excavating would be notified they won the bid. Discussion ensued.

Public Comment:

Evans asked the group to look at the approved park schedule for 2022 and set an on-site meeting for their park. (Myles Kimmerly Park and Old Settlers Park Committees will be instructed to do the same.). She explained that the success of last summer’s on-site visit (2021) to Myles Kimmerly Park inspired this action. June was suggested for Veronica Valley Park, but no firm date was set.

Committee Member Comments:

Walter asked about the timing for installation of the wayfaring signs at Veronica Valley Park. He thought it would be nice if they were installed in time for the on-site meeting.

Barrons said he wanted to invite Biologist Brian Price to talk about ponds being potential sources of milfoil in the lakes. Popa was unclear about the need to have him speak, adding that he thought Price was very busy. Barrons said he would first talk one-on-one with Price before making a decision. Christensen suggested that Price attend a meeting and speak during public comment.

Regarding the printing of the new park brochures, Christensen wondered if a new picture of Veronica Valley Park with “the sign in the new position” was needed. Barrons responded that if it was the same sign, he did not feel there was a need to update the shot. Evans mentioned pictures taken by drones would be a nice touch for highlighting the attractiveness of the parks. Christensen said the QR code on the back of the brochure was updated and that the brochures were now ready to print. The quantity has yet to be determined.

Motion to Adjourn:

**Motion by Christensen to adjourn. Seconded by Barrons.**

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

**No – 0**

**Motion Passes.**

The meeting adjourned to the call of Committee Chairman Barrons at 11:01 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lori Eubanks, Recording Secretary