

**Leelanau County Parks and Recreation Commission**  
Executive Committee – Wednesday, June 16, 2021  
Leelanau County Government Center, Suttons Bay, Michigan  
*Tentative Minutes – Meeting Recorded*  
<https://www.leelanau.gov/meetingdetails.asp?MAId=2157>

The Executive Committee of the Leelanau County Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order at 3:37 p.m. by Commission Chairman Casey Noonan.

Chairman Noonan waived the Pledge of Allegiance, as it was recited at the preceding Regular Session.

**Roll Call:** Dave Barrons, *Vice-Chairman*  
Steve Christensen, *Secretary*  
Casey Noonan, *Chairman*

Also in Attendance: Melinda Lautner, Parks & Rec Commissioner  
John Popa, Parks & Rec Commissioner  
Rick Robbins, Parks & Rec Commissioner  
Laurel Evans, Executive Assistant

**Public Comment:**  
Call-in Number: 231-256-8109 – there was no public comment.

**Agenda Addition/Deletions:**  
Barrons noted Popa’s suggestion to add the request for the addition of a skilled assistant for the Parks and Recreation Commission to handle miscellaneous administrative tasks, such as writing and reviewing bids, and overseeing park plans and grant development. The proposed position would be a part-time, contracted position with an annual salary of \$25,000.00. Discussion ensued on Popa’s suggestion (handout link: [https://www.leelanau.gov/downloads/popa\\_meetings\\_and\\_budget\\_06162021.pdf](https://www.leelanau.gov/downloads/popa_meetings_and_budget_06162021.pdf)). Barrons remarked there were times during a recent grant application process he had thought, ‘Gee, the County should have a professional’ to assist with the grant-writing process.

**Action Items –**  
**Budget Discussion/Recommendations.** Chairman Noonan said he is unsure of the documents needed to submit the request for a skilled assistant position for the Parks Commission, but thought the recruitment was worth pursuing. He said because the Commission has no Parks and Rec Director, they struggle administratively and the addition of this position would lighten the workload for Maintenance Worker W. Scott Bradley, who is frequently taken off task to provide assistance on administrative issues.

Lautner remarked she felt that it was unlikely that the Board of Commissioners would approve the position; however, what has been proposed has merit, and yet, should the County have

someone they use (for grant-writing), perhaps on a contractual basis...we could use a grant writer in every department. She suggested looking into hiring a graduate student. We could put it in the budget to hire a grant writer. Barrons said the position would be more than just writing grants. Discussion ensued. Barrons remarked, could Parks and Recreation contract for an “executive assistant”? Lautner remarked, you could always ask for it. Discussion followed on Bradley’s duties. Noonan said this is one of the few “departments” that doesn’t have a director; that is why we struggle to do what we do. Popa asked and several responded Bradley’s supervisor is Maintenance Director Jerry Culman II. Noonan added (this type of position) has been kicked around for a while. Bradley relies on us to do the “legwork”. Robbins questioned if work-release inmates could be utilized for parks duties in the summer months.

Lautner added the County is considering potentially hiring an HR person and perhaps grant writing could be added to the job description. She added until just a few years ago, Parks did their own minutes. We have been fortunate to have Evans step in and provide guidance. Noonan complimented Evans for her assistance. Lautner said the Commission’s best bet would be to see if the new HR person could write grants, and have that part of their (job) description.

Chairman Noonan asked and Evans responded Noonan should work with Chief Deputy County Clerk Jennifer L. Zywicki on any budget related questions. Christensen noted it took a while to get a part-time parks person for Bradley. This request is unrelated to the rest of the budget discussion; the top portion (detailing employees), we do not touch and is not part of what we are talking about. We could certainly go to the Board of Commissioners and ask for a person. Popa suggested looking at the line item for “contractors.” More comments followed on contracted help. Noonan said if we are looking for a contracted position, it would be better to ask for that separately, as Christensen suggested. Noonan and Popa to follow-up with County Administrator Chet Janik. Discussion followed. ***Consensus to meet with County Administrator Chet Janik for guidance on how to submit the request.***

A discussion ensued regarding a May 19, 2021, email from Commissioner Popa that contained five budget requests:

- 1) Create a safety walk-around the old putting green at Veronica Valley Park - \$15,000.00;
- 2) Pave the parking lot at Veronica Valley Park - \$61,000.00 to \$80,000.00;
- 3) Add a skilled assistant for the Parks and Recreation Commission - \$25,000.00;
- 4) Purchase playground equipment at Old Settlers Park - \$12,000.00 to \$20,000.00 (though it was noted Northport’s installation was \$22,000.00); and
- 5) Paint the bridge at Veronica Valley Park (no dollar figure provided. Popa said he thought the bridge did not need painting for another five years.)

Christensen said we will need to organize this; the Executive Committee needs to make a list and make some choices. Public input is welcome. Barrons said if we put in for a parking lot upgrade (at Veronica Valley Park [VVP]), do we want to leave out painting (the bridge)? Popa

dissented, saying we should put it in and let someone else throw it out. Discussion ensued on the proposed VVP parking lot and the budget request documentation.

Chairman Noonan remarked this is new to him, asking for more than what is budgeted. Christensen said if we create a budget and all but one big item is in our budget, the big item is the number one thing we are considering as a group, it is this much, and we are asking the County Board to pony up this amount for a special request, and the rest is in our budget. More comments followed; discussion ensued on what the County Board reviews during budget. Noonan outlined what he looks for in preparing budget documents. This is the first time we have proposed all these large projects at one time. He said he is struggling with how to structure this into the budget. He has to put into the budget what they are requesting. When he was a (County) Commissioner, he never saw that done, where someone had asked for a \$200,000.00 increase in their budget. Discussion followed.

Barrons said he would support the paved, circular (trail loop at Myles Kimmerly Park [MKP]) as the number one, big budget priority for this year's budget request over any of the others we have talked about. Lautner said that is where she was going to go. Barrons continued – that paved walkway was discussed the first time he attended a Commission meeting five years ago. Lautner said she does not disagree with that. We probably won't get \$250,000.00; but the (County Board) may come back and say, 'We'll give you eighty-thousand (dollars) for that this year.' Discussion followed on the projected cost to build the paved loop trail at MKP. Chairman Noonan asked and Lautner suggested he discuss how to write up that request with Zywicki.

Lautner said another approach would be to consider the recently awarded \$4.2 million awarded to Leelanau County through the American Rescue Plan Act. If we fought hard for that, that is something the entire population can use. It is a health and safety issue, much like the TART trail. Discussion followed.

***Consensus was to ask for an increase to the 2022 Capital Outlay from \$45,000.00 to \$60,000.00 and to pursue with the County Board the idea of using stimulus money for the remaining projects.***

Christensen stressed he thinks there needs to be a separate "wish list" – a separate request form. Popa remarked there are still some remaining big-ticket items – the driveway upgrade and pond walkway at VVP. Lautner said let's increase our capital outlay; we have talked about this for a number of years. Barrons asked and Chairman Noonan said he will break down the \$60,000.00 by item. Lautner added maybe the entrance this year, the Old Settlers Park (OSP) playground equipment. Noonan stated those items, as well as parking lot improvements, pickle ball courts, and a dog park. Discussion ensued. Noonan said that is what he needs from this session – where we sit regarding capital outlay, our other budget line items have always been in line.

Barrons remarked, so we will (request to) increase the capital outlay line item. Chairman Noonan said he will provide a summary of the requests.

A list of potential projects provided by Bradley was reviewed - [https://www.leelanau.gov/downloads/scotts\\_project\\_list\\_05252021.pdf](https://www.leelanau.gov/downloads/scotts_project_list_05252021.pdf). Discussion ensued on the proposed dog park.

**Public Comment:**

Lautner noted the County Board would be conducting “Committee of the Whole” sessions at the end of June. She will bring up the idea of using stimulus funds for Parks and Recreation at that time.

**Commissioner Comments:**

None.

**Chairperson Comments:**

None.

**Adjournment:**

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

**Ayes – 3 (Barrons; Christensen; Noonan)**

**No – 0**

**Motion Passes.**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

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Lori D. Eubanks, Recording Secretary