

**BAYFIELD COUNTY FORESTRY AND PARKS DEPARTMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING
January 14, 2019
County Board Room**

Members Present: Fred Strand, Chairperson; Jeffrey Silbert, Vice-Chairperson; Harold Maki, Larry Fickbohm and David Zepczyk

Staff in Attendance: Jason Bodine, Administrator; Steve Probst, Asst. Administrator; and Pat Bruno, Office Manager

Others: Joseph LeBouton, WI DNR Liaison; Mike Bebeau and Brandon Cohen, Xcel Energy; Roy Settgas and Bob Adams, Bayfield Peninsula Energy Alternative; Mark Abeles-Allison, County Administrator; and Lindley Mattson.

1. Call to Order of Forestry and Parks Committee Meeting.

The meeting of the Forestry and Parks Committee was called to order by Chairman F. Strand at 6:01 P.M.

2. Public Comment.

Chairperson Strand called for public comment. After repeating the call no one came forward. Closed public comment.

3. Approval of the November 19, 2018 Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: (Zepczyk, Maki) to approve the minutes as presented. All: Yes. Carried.

4. Introduction of Lindley Mattson as the new Office Manager of the Forestry and Parks Department.

J. Bodine introduced, and the Committee welcomed Lindley Mattson who will start training with Pat as the new office manager on January 21, 2019.

5. Xcel Energy. Update on the proposed Xcel Energy Second Circuit Transmission Line Project.

Brendon Cohen provided a summary of the proposed second circuit transmission line improving electrical liability to the Bayfield peninsula by adding a second circuit transmission line and to build two new substations. Both routes would require building a bypass line for various reasons until the new poles are constructed. Both routes would use a mostly 55'-60' wooden poles. The Eastern route would accommodate both lines on one pole, but the Western line would have separate poles and lines to accommodate the back up (redundancy) line.

Public hearings were held. A proposal was prepared to be presented to the Public Services Commission in early 2019. The temporary bypass is the new addition to the Eastern route proposal. Minimal County Forest Land (CFL) acreage for new easement acquisition is required for the proposed Eastern route. The Eastern route currently goes through 26.2 acres of CFL. The Eastern bypass route would add on 22.7 acres of CFL. The Western route would require 46.2 acres of CFL.

Once reviewed and a route is selected by the PSC, Xcel would then acquire conditional use permits for the substation sites and licenses and easements for the transmission lines.

**6. Bayfield Peninsula Energy Alternative (BPEA), Roy Settgas, Spokesperson; and Bob Adams.
Update on the proposed Xcel Energy 2nd Circuit Transmission Line Project.**

R. Settgas summarized the process of listing criteria and presenting to the Towns that the group has done to arrive at a recommendation as to the preferred route. The group is looking for the Committee's and then full County Board's support for the Eastern route option which is supported by the five Townships and cities of Washburn and Bayfield who are affected by the project.

Xcel's B. Cohen commented that the Eastern route, even though the existing home owners were aware of the existing power line when purchasing their homes, will be impacted by an aesthetic impact of a double circuit line on their properties. Residents may have not had an opportunity to comment. BPEA understands that the people along the Eastern route aware of the potential impacts. The people impacted by the Western route also know of the impacts and are willing to accept the line for the sake of the community.

The impacts of the Eastern route currently exists. The Western route does not eliminate the Eastern route's existing impact. The difference in the two routes is one option has two rights of way and the other has one right of way.

B. Cohen suggested to keep in mind the impacts to residents on the Eastern route relate to deconstructing and constructing (taller) lines. Residents on both lines will have a chance to comment during the PSC review.

MOTION: (Silbert, Maki) *Whereas, in August of 2017, Xcel Energy announced their plan to install a new "Second Circuit" to improve quality and reliability of electrical service for their customers in Bayfield, Washburn and on Madeline Island.*

and whereas, after receiving input from the Bayfield County community, Xcel Energy reconsidered the routing of the Second Circuit Project and developed an additional routing option for the project. Xcel calls this new route option the East Route, and their original proposal is now the West Route,

and whereas, Xcel Energy has stated that both route options meet their objectives for the Second Circuit Project and that they will not indicate to the Public Service Commission preference for one route over the other,

and whereas, interested local citizens developed a tool for comparing the impacts of different route options for the project, and the Town Boards of the five affected Townships all endorsed the use of this tool for deciding which route would be preferred,

and whereas, application of this route comparison tool shows the East Route to be the preferable option with regard to impacts to the community and local environment,

and whereas, Township Boards of Eileen, Barksdale, Washburn, Bayview, and Bayfield, and the City Councils of Washburn and Bayfield all considered this and all went on record in favor of the East Route,

and whereas, the East Route will require less new acreage from the Bayfield County Forest inventory,

Now, therefore be it resolved, that the Bayfield County Forestry and Parks Committee recommends and

endorses the East Route option for the Xcel Energy Second Circuit Project and forwards this resolution to the full Bayfield County Board for their consideration. Dated January 14, 2019.

Further discussion: None. All yes. Carried.

7. Monthly Reports.

A. Forestry (all updates):

1) 2018 Budget.

Timber sale revenues for CY 2018 ending at \$4,562,243.45, which surpassed the budgeted \$3.23 million. Early predictions for 2019 are for a much leaner year. Expenses are generally on target. To date, January timber sale revenues are at \$150,000.

2) Stewardship Grant.

An updated grant application was submitted in October; however, the original grant has not been retracted by the DNR and the new one has not been re-submitted to the Joint Finance Committee. It is not known when it will be addressed due to the new administration's restructuring.

3) Shooting/Trap Range.

The Club has reported that an area is being cleared for the new trap range. The Club will provide information to the Committee when there has been more progress and plans are ready for the new year.

4) WI Habitat Partnership Grant.

Bayfield County was awarded \$51,000 to continue the Barnes Barrens scheduled infrastructure work around the perimeter of the core area and for invasive species control. The grant will be used to help offset expenses into the year 2020.

B. Parks (update).

The parks are officially closed for the season. Twin Bear campground was used to provide parking for an ice fishing tournament last month. The County Highway Department will continue to plow general access parking, but the parks are not open for camping.

C. Trails and Recreation (all updates).

1) Motorized Trails.

Due to fluctuating weather, the current trail conditions are not ideal, but the only trail closed now is 31 S.

2) Non-Motorized Trails.

Groups such as North End Ski Club and Mt. Ashwabay have been grooming cross country ski trails for a few weeks. They are reporting average use.

3) Yurts.

The yurts remain very active. Year-end gross revenues for the three yurts combined were approximately \$30,000. After the town room taxes are applied, the net revenue is approximately \$28,000. Dissuading the use of cut firewood for the outdoor fire pits is a challenge. Firewood use will be monitored to determine if the rates will need to be increased. The original Bayfield yurt (Evergreen) rental was increased to \$70/night. The Cable yurt rental remains at \$65/night.

4) Events.

There are no new events for the agenda. The following events previously approved by the Committee and approved internally since the last committee meeting are the Chequamegon Fat Tire Mountain Bike Event (in Cable); the Apostle Islands Sled Dog Race (in Bayfield); the Mt. Borah Epic Mountain Bike Race (in Cable); and the Summit Cross Country Ski Race (Mt. Ashwabay).

5) WI Coastal Management Grant.

a) Fire Hill Project.

The grant application for acquisition is currently under review. Preliminary project selection hearings will be in Madison on January 31. J. Bodine may attend.

b) Siskiwit Falls Project(s).

This project is also under review on January 31. Due to WI Coastal Management Program's (WCMP) requirement of pre-approval for proposed work, the access work was delayed. There was also discussion regarding the possible need for a state historical survey/review by the State Historical Preservation Office. Once the determinations for approvals are received and road bans are lifted, the work will continue.

Another grant request was submitted to WCMP for additional upgrades and improvements to the primary access trail along the Eastern side of the Siskiwit River to provide access for falls viewing. The grant request is \$60,000 and would require a 50% match. If approved, the match would be accomplished through a combination of capital project funds (budgeted) and an Recreational Trails Aid grant from the DNR (if awarded).

6) FEMA Projects.

a) Motorized Trails.

The motorized trail projects were completed and ready for use before the first snow event of the season. If awarded, there will be an amendment to the 2019 budget submitted.

b) Landfill.

No official grant determination has been received to date for the Delta project.

***MOTION:** (Maki, Fickbohm) to receive and place reports on file. No discussion. All: Yes. Carried.*

8. 2019 Forestry and Parks Department Annual Work Plan.

J. Bodine referenced the draft 2019 work plan and highlighted important forest management challenges and goals such as the sustainable harvest 4,912 acreage goals. The swamp hardwood (black ash) management goal is increased significantly due to the emerald ash borer threat. The goal is to manage the stands within the next 5-6 years, primarily to provide additional regeneration options. CFL compartments are on a 16-18 year inventory cycle. Year 2019 is the start of a new cycle. Reforestation plans were listed. County Forest Inventory data collected from the CFI plot establishments will be used in the future. The regeneration monitoring program has grown to a total of 6,804 acres; three times larger than a few years ago. There are 55 new sales sold each year and 50-75 are active in any given year. At the end of 2018, there were 123 timber sales under contract with 33 different contractors and a total contract value of nearly \$10.3 million.

Recreation goals would be to find more ways to expand the use of the forest and to maintain use agreements

with a variety of clubs.

Access management will be a priority to research existing networks, to re-inventory what exists for feasibility and revising the access plan.

The Towns receive a shared total of \$80,000 for road projects in addition to the 10% stumpage revenue sharing from the sale of wood on county forest lands.

Invasive species such as spotted knapweed, buckthorn, black locust and new disease outbreaks such as oak wilt continue to be monitored and/or treated.

Land acquisition efforts include the application for a stewardship grant to add approximately 691 acres to county forest land, if successful.

***MOTION:** (Maki, Silbert) to approve and forward to the full county board with a recommendation for approval. No further discussion. All: Yes. Carried.*

9. 2018 Forestry and Parks Department Budget Amendment(s).

J. Bodine listed the primary budget line item adjustments that will be presented to the committee at the next meeting. They are stewardship grant revenue and expenses will be capital accounts versus operating budget accounts; snowmobile maintenance revenue and expense accounts will have an \$89,000 grant for extra storm grant work from last season that will be adjusted; FEMA projects once the grants are awarded; payments to the towns due to the increased timber sale revenue and expenses for repairs for a U.S. Forest Services partnership \$40,000 grant. All entries will be net zero adjustments.

No action taken.

10. Joseph LeBouton, DNR Representative.

2018 was a very productive year and looking forward to the next year's work. The DNR has a fully staffed ten-person team. F. Strand expressed an appreciation for the work the DNR brings to the County Forest.

11. Executive Session.

*At 7:39 P.M. a **MOTION:** (Fickbohm/Zepczyk) to enter in and out of Executive Session pursuant to Wisconsin Statute 19.85(1)(c), to consider employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of various public employees over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility. The Committee will discuss and may take action on performance and/or compensation.*

At this time J. Bodine, S. Probst, P. Bruno, and J. LeBouton and all members of the public left the board room.

A. Approval of the May 14, 2018 Executive Session Minutes.

Reconvened in open session at 8:02 P.M.

12. February 2019 Meeting Date and Agenda Items.

Due to a scheduling conflict, Chairperson Strand requested rescheduling the February 11 Committee meeting to be held February 18, 2019; 6:00 P.M. in the County Board Room.

13. Recognizing Pat Bruno Upon Her Retirement from Bayfield County.

A resolution was read by F. Strand recognizing and thanking P. Bruno for her 25 years with Bayfield County.

***MOTION:** (Maki, Fickbohm) to accept the resolution as read. All: Yes. Carried.*

The meeting adjourned at 8:09 P.M.

The next Forestry and Parks Committee meeting will be held **Monday, February 18, 2019 at 6:00 P.M.** at Bayfield County Courthouse, County Board Room, Second Floor, 117 E. 5th Street, Washburn, Wisconsin.

Submitted by,

Pat Bruno