

**BAYFIELD COUNTY FORESTRY AND PARKS DEPARTMENT  
COMMITTEE MEETING  
January 16, 2017  
County Board Room**

**Members Present:** Shawn Miller, Chairperson; Fred Strand, Vice-Chairperson; Harold Maki; Larry Fickbohm and Jeffrey Silbert

**Staff in Attendance:** Jason Bodine, Administrator; Steve Probst, Assistant Administrator; Mark Abeles-Allison, County Administrator; and Pat Bruno, Office Manager

**Others in Attendance:** Jeremy Oswald, County Board Supervisor; Joseph LeBouton, WI DNR Liaison

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

The meeting of the Forestry and Parks Committee was called to order by S. Miller at 6:00 P.M.

**2. Public Comment.**

S. Miller called for public comment.

Eleanor Chernoff; resident, Town of Bell has concerns about public safety access, trespass, unleashed pets, illegal and over parking issues to the two proposed access points of the Siskiwit Falls Estuary planned project. Eighty-three people from the Town of Bell have signed the petition against the land acquisition project.

Deb Pozzi; resident, Town of Bell; is concerned about turning 100 acres of residential property into a conservancy and future funding available for upkeep and maintenance. Also concerns for residents privacy, traffic issues and inadequate available parking. Also removing 100 acres off the tax rolls and then places a burden on the residents. Overall real estate taxes for 2016 were increased by 18%.

Mark Abeles-Allison; County Administrator for Bayfield County. Superior Days discussions prioritized four topics for 2017 lobbying at Madison on 2/21-22. One item of interest to the Forestry and Parks Committee is the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. Bayfield, Ashland, Douglas, Iron Counties have 27% of the county forest in Wisconsin. When a town has county forest land in its boundaries, the town receives \$.30/acre annually; the rate set in 1989. A Superior Days proposal is to increase the rate to \$1.00/acre. This could result in a net increase to towns in Bayfield County of \$120,000.

Bucky Jardine; resident, Town of Port Wing; is in support of expanding the shooting range and encouraged anyone in government office to know both sides of any issue that comes before them. He is also in support of the residents in opposition of the Siskiwit River Estuary project.

Mike Fiorio, citizen of Town of Eileen and representative of the Bayfield Regional Conservancy, spoke in favor of the Siskiwit River Estuary Project to preserve public access to land; comparing it to the benefits that the national parks have provided. Public land access brings tourism dollars to the area.

Richard Bower, resident of the Town of Russell; has noticed a dramatic change in the hardwood forest near Peterson Hill and he encourages a reassessment in future management practices in maintaining diversity.

Kathleen Russell; property owner in Town of Bell and serves on the Land Projects Committee of the Bayfield Conservancy; The Swenson's (property owners adjacent to the Siskiwit River) and the community understand the importance of property and community preservation. The Conservancy can provide these protections via a conservation easement legal document. Cornucopia business owners support the project.

The town could consider a lodging tax to generate revenue to support the project infrastructure. Regarding the County forest timber management program, the economic benefit is important; however, she suggests future consideration of long range revenue, wild game and plant diversity, and other recreation opportunities.

John Hall; resident of the Town of Bell; being a nearby resident he enjoys and uses the Lost Creek Falls (LCF) trail daily and refers visitors to LCF and the Siskiwit Falls. He feels that the hikers are good people and are taking good care of the trail.

Amie Egstad; neighbor of the Town of Bell Trap Range has not seen a resolution to the dirty noise issue, a reclamation plan for lead abatement, nor litter control by and from the ABC Sportsmen's Club (ABCSC). The neighbors met with J. Bodine and members of the ABCSC. No other sites are planned to be considered by the ABCSC. Concerned that trap range proposal is going to be opened to trap throwers, not just for the children that which was initially proposed, and for all the increased problems that could bring. The Town of Bell pays for plowing the range now and also the trap range acreage would reduce potential tax dollars and timber sale revenues to the County.

Brenda Lafrancois; resident Town of Bell expressed key issues with the proposed trap range which are the noise enforcement and contaminant issues; trap expansion noise issues and neighborhood friction; lead contaminants clean up; use restrictions and enforcement. On-line petition had dozens of signatures and comments; questioning a need for a trap range here, the area's natural character, and add more silent sport opportunities in the area.

Chris Bretting; Board member of ABCSC; reiterating that the trap range is for the kids; used 3-4 hours one day a week and 1-2 hours for kids who can't make it; only in the spring and fall. For safety reasons, the Club is interested in moving the trap throwers from the rifle range to the trap range. The range doesn't get used in the winter and the town plows the town road only. He is concerned that there are people shooting off of Jody Road into a berm. The ABCSC tries to police the litter.

Doug Cannon, Board member of ABCSC; cited recommendations from lead reclamation companies for rifle and trap ranges. The plan is to clear a 100 yard shooting area from the trap house in a pie shape of vegetation for ease of lead reclamation. The trap throwers have been using the rifle range for trap throwing which creates safety and clean up issues. All the shooting is to be directed away from residential areas.

Tom Mason; resident of Cornucopia; expressed support for turning the Swenson property into a park.

Mike Blomquist, Forester, Sappi North America. There is no market now for balsam wood. Currently 3% of their total cordage is balsam. Requesting as to how this issue can best be addressed to the benefit of the contractors and the County.

Ann Bowker; resident of Peterson Hill is encouraging the County to reconsider the timber management practices, especially the harvesting of hardwood.

Jackie Eid; resident of Town of Bell said that some community members want to know who their neighbor will be and they are aware that the DNR will monitor via regulations. She expressed concerns for the Siskiwit River estuary project's future maintenance funding. Also, the proposed traffic expansion could negatively affect wildlife conservation. The Town of Bell will not be able to afford maintenance if the funding is not available.

Terry Peters; Mellen, WI has a timber sale with the county with 191 cords of fir. He offered to pay for the stumpage and sever the tree from the stump, lop and scatter. The 5" bolt market is drying up.

S. Miller called for more comments and none were received. Comments were closed.

### 3. Approval of the November 14, 2016 Meeting Minutes.

**MOTION:** (Strand, Silbert) to approve the minutes as presented. Carried.

### 4. Shooting Range. Trap Expansion Proposal. ABC Sportsmen's Club

Chris Bretting described the requested safe trap range expansion area (40 acres) on the map and the 4 acre area where the vegetation will be cleared. The direction of shooting and berm are planned to help with the noise. Tree transplanting has been accomplished to help with sound abatement. Current hours of operation are 8:00 AM-7:00 PM, but some use after hours occurs. The ABCSC feels that after-hours policing could be reduced if law enforcement stopped by to talk with people. The Club intends to install a fence around the entire 40 acre perimeter of the trap range for safety.

J. Bodine, the ABCSC and neighbors met recently; however, no agreement was reached. Concerns remain regarding hours of operation enforcement, lead abatement plan, monitoring, clean up and the newest information that the trap range will be opened to trap throwers.

A letter of support came from the South Shore School District regarding the trap expansion.

If the 40 acre addition is approved by the Committee, the land would go through the conditional use permit process and lease revision process.

J Silbert recommends a lead reclamation plan, and reduction in the number of days open each week and reduced hours. He added another concern of potential adding recreational trails to the Jody Road kettles area and the close proximity (1 mile) from the shooting range.

L. Fickbohm asked if more meetings are needed with the neighbors. The ABCSC is of the opinion that more meetings would not provide an agreeable resolution.

F. Strand would support the request if the following is met: lead reclamation plan is provided by the ABCSC, some reduction in hours of use of both trap and rifle ranges and an ordinance is in place so that law enforcement could enforce hours of use if needed. C. Bretting added that if hours are restricted more, then the public will go to other unsafe areas.

**MOTION:** (Maki, Strand) that we expand the shooting range to trap range what they are asking for to move forward. Yes: All No: None. Carried.

Discussion: J. Bodine: Moving forward would open the opportunities to rewrite the lease with new terms to be sent to the state. Concerns regarding hours of operation and lead reclamation plans would be addressed. All would come back to the committee before any ground would break. Also if the state disapproves, then the entire process stops.

**AMENDED MOTION:** (Miller, Maki) to move forward in regard to let Jason research it [adding the trap range], talk to our attorneys, talk to the state, put a plan together to bring to this committee for final approval. Yes: All No: None. Carried.

Discussion: F. Strand emphasized for clarification that the ABCSC may proceed with the planning process but nothing physical would happen nor is any physical work on the ground authorized.

**5. Land Conservation project: Erika Lang, Conservation Director, Bayfield Regional Conservancy.**

The Bayfield Regional Conservancy, on behalf of the WI DNR, is asking if the County is interested in signing a non-binding resolution of support for the Conservancy's grant proposal to the WIDNR. The Conservancy is in the application process for a WI DNR Knowles-Nelson Grant purchase of 100 acres along the lower Siskiwit River watershed. The family who currently owns the property had come to the Conservancy to ask assistance in protection of the property for the purposes of securing future public access and protection. The Conservancy took an interest in ownership of the property thus pursuing a competitive grant (one from the State DNR and one from federal funds) to purchase.

She explained that there is some local opposition to the purchase. The Town of Bell has provided a signed letter of support and resolution. The Town of Bell has applied to Wisconsin Coastal management program. Coastal Management submitted the project to NOAA for review and for the federal portion of this grant. If the grants are awarded, the Conservancy has asked the Town of Bell to take ownership. If they decline, the Conservancy may ask Bayfield County to take ownership. Ownership could provide alternative recreational opportunities to the Lost Creek Falls Trail network.

Access points will be decided with public input; and not yet decided. Future property owners would have to adhere to guidelines provided by both grants, if awarded. Also the Conservancy would hold a conservation easement. The easement will serve as a protection into perpetuity. A management plan would accompany the easement. The plan is supported by a friends group that has formed. Funds have been raised for maintenance expenses. Maintenance expenses support is expected from Wisconsin Coastal Management grants also.

The County's potential monetary benefit is anticipated to be tourism revenues and a nominal amount of PILT.

F. Strand pointed out whether the Committee weighs in or not that this is a private transaction between private parties; the owner and a non-profit organization.

**MOTION:** (Strand, Fickbohm) That the Forestry Committee support the stewardship grant application on the basis of the natural resource values of the property, for tourism economic development potential, for the preservation, for a sense of place in the community, and that it is consistent with both the County's and the Town's comprehensive plans. Yes: F. Strand, L. Fickbohm, J. Silbert. No: H. Maki. Carried.

Discussion: F. Strand added that the motion does not address potential county ownership in the future.

**6. Monthly Financial Report.**

**A. Forestry**

**1) Department 2016 Budget Update.**

J. Bodine reported that the total timber sale revenues have surpassed 2015 at an estimated \$5.04 million. The caveat to the revenues is that the market will dictate the outcomes and the markets are predicted to drop in the future.

Regarding the existing balsam fir situation, the Committee directed J. Bodine to make a decision on how to handle the inquiries made at the public comment portion of the meeting on the direction the

County is going to take towards resolution.

J. Bodine said there will be two expense line items coming to the full county board for adjustment consideration. They are the 10% to towns for timber revenue and also the \$65,000 expense from the storm paid by federal dollars.

**2) Department 2017 Budget Update.**

To date, timber sale revenues are slow which is normal.

**3) Land Use Plan Revision Update.**

The goal is to begin working on sections of the plan soon which will expire in 2020. No selection has been made yet on which chapter is the priority.

**4) General Discussion on Public Outreach.**

J. Bodine brought this subject to the Committee for consideration due to an increased number of citizen communication received recently on forest management practices. The Committee discussed several options on what, if and/or how to proceed.

**B. Parks.**

Parks are quiet right now. Remaining are a few seasonal sites open at Delta Lake and 2-3 open at Twin Bear for 2017.

**C. Trails and Recreation**

**1) Snowmobile Trail Updates.**

The season was late this year and conditions are still not perfect. Blowdown cleanup continues on Trail 31 in Barnes.

**2) FEMA Projects Update.**

To date project approvals have not been received and a few minor projects yet to wrap up. Expenses have been paid and reimbursements are expected.

**3) Federal Trail Projects Update.**

The County worked with the feds and state on two projects in 2016 and both have been fully reimbursed. This is a good example of how three government entities can work quickly and work well together. J. Bodine thanked John Mesko for a job well done monitoring the work.

**4) Yurt Updates**

The Bayfield (Mt. Ashwabay) yurt has been extremely popular with an 80% capacity of which is mostly 70% local people. The Cable yurt has been more in the 40% capacity range; largely due to the snow trail conditions were late.

**MOTION:** (Silbert, Fickbohm) to receive and place on file the financial monthly reports. Carried.

**7. 2017 Department Work Plan.**

The Work Plan sets direction for the Department and also is used to apply for the county administrator 50/50 state grant.

**MOTION:** (Strand, Maki) to approve the Department's 2017 Work Plan. Carried.

**8. 2016 Budget Amendments.**

These are adjustments for the 10% funds to Towns for timber sale revenues and for the federal trails grants. If approved, it would go to the full county board for consideration.

**MOTION:** (Silbert, Maki) to approve the 2016 budget amendments as presented. Carried.

**9. Recreational Use Request. American Birkebeiner Association.**

This is the annual request to use county trails for the Birkie Tour on January 15, the American Birkebeiner on March 11, Fat Tire Birkie on March 11 and Birkie Trail Run and Trek on September 29, 2017.

**MOTION:** (Silbert, Strand) to approve the request. Carried.

**10. Recreational Use Request: Mt. Borah Foundation, LLC.**

J. Bodine received the annual request from Mt. Borah Foundation to use trails located on county forest land for the Mt. Borah Epic mountain bike race in the Town of Cable on June 3, 2017.

**MOTION:** (Strand, Fickbohm) to approve the request. Carried.

**11. Recreational Use Request: Life Time Triathlon Series, LLC.**

J. Bodine received the annual request from Life Time Triathlon Series, LLC to use trails located on county forest land for the Chequamegon Fat Tire Festival on September 16, 2017 in the Town of Cable.

**MOTION:** (Fickbohm, Strand) to approve the request. Carried.

**12. Recreational Use Request: Minnesota Orienteering Club.**

Minnesota Orienteering Club has requested to utilize county forest land and trails in the Cable area to host an orienteering event on August 5-6, 2017.

**MOTION:** (Fickbohm, Silbert) to approve the request. Carried.

**13. Sand and Gravel Agreement: Town of Russell.**

The Town of Russell has requested a 5-year agreement to purchase 5,000 yards/year @ \$1.50/yard of sand and permission to stage the Sand River pit when needed. When the agreement is complete, the Forestry and Parks Department will manage the reclamation process for timber growth restoration.

**MOTION:** (Maki, Strand) to approve the request for an agreement. Carried.

**14. Potential Land Transaction(s) with the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.**

The Tribe is in process of applying for an \$80,000 grant to acquire property that is adjacent to the Frog Bay property. If the grant is approved, it would come back to the Committee before going to the full county board. If a purchase is successful, the revenue would go into a non-lapsing revenue account earmarked for future county forest land purchase. No action taken.

**15. Proposal to Increase Town PILT Payments.**

WCFA letter regarding this subject is included for support of the increase. The PILT to the towns has not increased since 1989. For towns in Bayfield County, the payment is currently at \$.30/acre, yielding \$52,000. The proposed increase to \$1.00/acre would yield \$172,000 to towns in Bayfield County.

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| <b>MOTION:</b> (Strand, Silbert) to approve to support the increase of town PILT payments. Carried. |
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**16. Joseph LeBouton, DNR Representative.**

J. LeBouton offered the DNR's assistance for providing educational presentations for the public. J. Bodine suggests smaller groups versus larger groups.

**12. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM.

The next Forestry and Parks Committee meeting and timber sale bid opening will be held **Monday, February 13, 2017 at 6:00 P.M.** at Bayfield County Courthouse, County Board Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 117 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Washburn, Wisconsin.

Submitted by,  
***Pat Bruno***