

**BAYFIELD COUNTY FORESTRY AND PARKS DEPARTMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING
March 12, 2018
County Board Room**

Members Present: Shawn Miller, Chairperson; Jeffrey Silbert and Larry Fickbohm

Members Absent: Fred Strand, Vice-Chairperson and Harold Maki

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

Others in Attendance: Joseph LeBouton, WI DNR Liaison

On the Telephone: Erika Lang, Conservation Director, Bayfield Regional Conservancy

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 6:02 P.M.

2. Public Comment.

S. Miller called for public comment.

Tom Mason, resident, has enjoyed the Siskiwit River area since his youth as has his family and wants it to be protected and kept safe as Dorothy Swenson would have wanted.

Yvette Fleming, resident, pointed out the unique geographic features, benefits to wildlife the area serves and recommended county acquisition of the Swenson River Preservation Project property.

Susan Keachie, resident of Cornucopia, spoke in favor of the acquisition. She was a proponent from the beginning and served on the committee that wrote the comprehensive plan.

Roger Lindgren, Cornucopia property landowner, has visited the area for 50 years and wants it to be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

Phil Moye, resident of Town of Bell, congratulated the department on the Lost Creek project and is in favor of county acquisition of the Siskiwit property.

Greg Weiss, Siskiwit Lake property owner who supports the project and wants it preserved for all.

Gordon Anderson, new adjacent property owner, and is in total support of the project to preserve its value to the community.

Mary O'Brien, Director of Development, Bayfield Regional Conservancy, shared that 70 donors have contributed \$185,000 towards the acquisition of this property. Many calls, notes and checks of appreciation have come to the BRC office in support.

Chairman Miller called twice for public comment; no more were received. Closed public comment.

3. Approval of the February 12, 2018 Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: (Silbert, Fickbohm) to accept the minutes from the February 12 meeting. All: Yes. Carried.

4. Resolution: Supporting Bayfield Regional Conservancy's (BRC) Siskiwit River Preserve Project, Including County Ownership and Management of the Property.

Erika Lang provided a summary of the BRC organization, who as a land trust, works with private landowners to establish easements or land acquisitions that protect natural resources in Northwest Wisconsin. Because the Siskiwit River Estuary Project is a property acquisition, the BRC sought grants and raised funds for the purpose of protecting the natural resources and securing opportunities for public access.

The Swenson property is situated on roughly 100 acres of the lower Siskiwit River watershed located in Township of Bell, near the community of Cornucopia. The diverse property lies along roughly 4,000 linear feet of along the Siskiwit River and has about 1,200 feet of waterfalls. The project aligns well with the both the County and Town of Bell comp plans. The project also meets the desires of the property owners to protect its natural resources and to be enjoyed by the local and regional communities.

In past meetings, the Committee supported the BRC securing funding sources to purchase the property. The Committee also previously supported considering county ownership, if full funding for the acquisition was secured by BRC and if the Town of Bell declined ownership. The Town of Bell Town Board rejected ownership of the property as per the Town's October 16, 2017 letter that refused the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) grant award. The Town of Bell Town Board also passed a motion to turn the project over to Bayfield County to purchase and manage the property.

The \$185,000 NOAA grant is ready to be awarded. The grant can only be awarded to a government entity, in this case, to Bayfield County. The BRC has also received approximately \$185,000 in private donations from around 70 donors. The intention is to use the grant and donations to purchase the property and to pay for closing costs and a property survey. The property would then be deeded to Bayfield County.

A variety of documents were shared with the Committee, including a project summary, management plan, NOAA grant guidelines and conservation easement. The BRC and the Department have jointly drafted a management plan for the property; the NOAA grant document (RFP) addresses parameters of the grant; a draft conservation easement that would be held by the BRC will also eventually be recorded on the deed. Neither the easement nor the management plan are viewed as overly restrictive. The easement would be recorded on the deed at some point after the county acquired ownership.

BRC is requesting that the committee recommend that the county board of supervisors accept the NOAA grant (when awarded) and accept ownership of the property.

Also, if purchased, there is a potential for the property to be enrolled in County Forest Law (CFL) under a special use designation. The conservation easement and CELCP grant both have restrictions on timber management (harvesting can occur, but primarily for habitat restoration or conservation-oriented purposes). As a result, the property would be ineligible for normal CFL entry, but would qualify as special use.

If the county wanted to pursue entry in CFL, the property would also be eligible to be used as a match in a future Stewardship grant. The restrictions of the CELCP award may devalue the property in a future appraisal, but, as per the Stewardship grant, the state would match our contribution (final valuation of the

match land). If approved, the grant could be used to purchase additional lands that would be enrolled in CFL.

Over the first few years of ownership, some continued required work on invasive species control and improved access to the primary attraction (the waterfalls) could potentially cost the county \$40-\$50,000. The development of a parking area, some initial trail improvements, signage, etc., would all be part of the initial work. Other future work would include reforestation of a roughly 8 acre field and more invasive species control. To help offset the costs, the BRC may be willing to assist in future grant applications.

L. Fickbohm commented that the Tourism Committee has approved this project and encourages trail establishment as a priority, anticipating high volumes of use. This also fits in well with the Town of Bell's comprehensive plan. He feels it is a unique opportunity and should not be passed up.

***MOTION:** (Fickbohm, Silbert) to approve this project as presented and pass it on to the full county board. All: Yes. Carried.*

5. Monthly Reports.

A. Forestry (all updates):

1) 2018 Budget.

The stumpage revenues for February were approximately \$234,000 which is close to average for this time of year. Expenses are normal.

2) Red Cliff Land Sale (80 acres).

The 80 acres sold to Red Cliff is in the process of CFL withdrawal. Red Cliff has the funding in place. Chad Abel expects to finalize everything quickly once official approval is received.

3) Stewardship Grant.

Preliminary approval has been received and the appraisals should be received by the end of the month. Once received, the state will start to their review.

B. Parks.

Parks Manager, Brenda Garrett, will return around April 1 to prepare for the May 1 campgrounds opening.

C. Trails and Recreation.

1) Motorized Trails.

The department is working with the DNR finalizing the official snowmobile map via the SNARS program project which uses GPS to digitize the trail maps. Once completed, the state will review. The file will serve as the base for the future digital map.

The Town of Kelly approved the re-route of Trail 4 and the trail re-connect project will be completed this summer.

2) Non-Motorized Trails.

Lost Creek Falls continues to be active through the winter.

3) Yurts.

Possibly due to the American Birkebeiner event, the Cable yurt out produced the Bayfield yurt's revenues for the month of February.

The second Bayfield yurt building project is in process. Collaboration with the contractor and permit preparations have begun and some components were ordered.

It was recently learned that the current Uniform Dwelling Code (UDC) inspector believes that inaccurate information was used when the first two yurts were built without UDC permits. No permits were granted because two different inspectors exempted the projects at the time. UDC is researching the issue. It is possible that there should have been UDC permits issued. It is also possible that these first two yurts may be considered pre-existing. J. Bodine is communicating with them and waiting to hear the decision.

***MOTION:** (Silbert, Fickbohm) to accept and place reports on file. All: Yes. Carried.*

6. 2018 Town Road Aids Project. Discussion of proposals and awarding of associated funds.

Requests from the towns were due on March 2. All the towns have responded and submitted a request. The Towns of Clover, Port Wing and Tripp are working together to repair portions of Battle Axe and Lenawee Roads. New to the Town Road Aid fund this year, the Town of Namakagon has submitted a request. From the chart, Option 1 provides an equal distribution of funding. Another option could be to base the distribution on a percentage of land per township and use as a base for the annual funding.

***MOTION:** (Fickbohm, Silbert) to accept road aid Option 1 as presented. Roll Call Vote: All: Yes. Carried.*

7. Wisconsin Habitat Partnership Fund. Discussion of proposal to apply for Wisconsin Habitat Partnership Funds on projects in the Barnes Barrens Management Area.

J. Bodine explained this new two year grant opportunity, funded with federal Pittman-Robertson dollars and administered through the DNR. The projects should help improve and expand wildlife habitat in Wisconsin with the goal of increasing the amount and quality of land open for hunting, trapping and wildlife viewing. It is a competitive grant using project scores using potential level of match equals points. Because the funds originate from a federal source, other state grants or aids can be used as a match. Bayfield County's project would include forest seeding, site preparation, and management of invasive species in the Barnes Barrens area. A county board resolution is required to accompany the funding application.

***MOTION:** (Silbert, Fickbohm) to approve the Department apply for the Wisconsin Habitat Partnership Fund. All: Yes. Carried.*

8. 2017 Accomplishment Report.

J. Bodine reported noted that timber sale establishment and administration comprise the largest volume of workload; the CFI program is a big step forward with J. Holmes planning and eager to start; the reforestation and invasive species programs are very strong; and parks and recreation are growing.

9. Joseph LeBouton, DNR Representative.

Nothing to report.

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 P.M.

The next Forestry and Parks Committee meeting will be held **Monday, April 9, 2018 at 6:00 P.M.** at Bayfield County Courthouse, County Board Room, Second Floor, 117 E. 5th Street, Washburn, Wisconsin.

Submitted by,

Pat Bruno