

**BAYFIELD COUNTY FORESTRY AND PARKS DEPARTMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING**

April 13, 2020

Remotely held via Microsoft Teams

Members Present: Fred Strand, Chairperson; David Zepczyk and Jeffrey Silbert, Larry Fickbohm

Members Absent: Harold Maki

Staff in Attendance: Jason Bodine, Administrator; Lindley Mattson, Office Manager; Steve Probst, Assistant Administrator; John Mesko, Forestry Technician

Others in Attendance: Joseph LeBouton, DNR Liaison

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

This meeting was called to order at 6:04pm. Chairman Strand took roll call of committee members and others in attendance.

2. Remote Meeting Procedures

Good evening, this open meeting of Bayfield County Forestry and Parks Committee meeting is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Evers' executive order no.12 of March 24, 2020, due to the current state of emergency in Wisconsin given the outbreak of covid-19.

In order to mitigate the transmission of this virus and reduce risk of Covid-19 illness we have been advised by the State of Wisconsin to minimize public gatherings. The WI Department of Justice issued an open Government Advisory on March 20. All members of public bodies are encouraged to participate remotely.

The order, which you can find posted with agenda materials is for this meeting allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with deliberations of the meeting.

Ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. This meeting will feature public comment. Even if members of the public do not provide comment, participants are advised that people may be listening who do not provide comment, and those person are not required to identify themselves.

For this meeting, Bayfield County is convening by Teams, as posted on the county's website identifying how the public may join.

Please note that this meeting is being recorded.

3. Public Comment.

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

4. Approval of the March 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: (Silbert, Fickbohm) to approve the minutes as presented. All: Yes. Carried.

5. Spring Timber Sale Offering

J. Bodine presented a locator map and a summary of all timber sales. This offering is one of the largest we've had. It includes 27 new sales, 7 that went no bid last time and 2 that we've had to take back from contractors. A total of 36 sales on 3,251 acres.

J. Bodine recommends offering as per normal but delaying the bid opening a month. Bid opening in June instead of May. Giving us more time to access the markets or let them normalize.

Discussion from committee on how a remote bid opening would be held. By the May meeting we should have a better grasp on how the June meeting might be handled.

More discussion on markets and expectations for bid openings. We are the only county to delay opening so that may be a benefit to us.

MOTION: (Silbert, Fickbohm) to approve timber sales presented and make the adjustments for the June bid opening. All: Yes. Carried.

6. Land Acquisition

This 30 acre parcel has over ¼ mile of existing snowmobile trail and it contains half of a snowmobile trail bridge, map was presented to the committee. The presence of the bridge is what pushed this piece up on the priority list. This purchase will secure the bridge and keep the motorized trail as is. This is a great opportunity for the County, at a great price.

There is a timber sale set up adjacent to this property, if purchased, we would incorporate this

MOTION: (Fickbohm, Silbert) give permission to Jason to work with the realtor and credit union to secure either a letter of intent or write an option to purchase, contingent on full board approval and securing funds and second: the permission to apply for DNR snowmobile aid grant in the amount of \$10,000. All: Yes. Carried.

Addition discussion with committee: The amount may differ based on the appraisal of the property as well as how much the county has to contribute.

7. Monthly Reports. Discussion of general activities, events, issues and accomplishments. Possible action on report(s) only.

a. Forestry (all updates):

- a) 2020 Budget. Revenues were roughly \$255k in January, \$270k in February and \$214 in March. Slightly below pace from 2019. Expenses are on target.
- b) Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant – Potential Project. Not much development on this over the last month. Still a developing project.
- c) Jackman Lake Land Sale Follow-up to a discussion from a few meetings ago. Hope is to close the sale before the end of April. All terms and conditions of the previous sales will be applied to this one. This sale would total one acre.
- d) Carbon Offset/Marketing This is very much in the beginning stages. J. Bodine's goal is to determine if a carbon accounting/marketing program would be a good fit for this forest and then bring those findings to a future meeting. Preliminary discussions were had with the state and carbon marketing does not conflict with County Forest Law. There appears to be solid potential heading into this phase.
- e) Spring Planting. Our planting program is relatively small (104 acres), which would normally take a crew about 1 ½ days to complete. All of our trees have been lifted and are in the freezer at the Hayward nursery. All county forest programs that were able to get trees, are proceeding as planned. The goal is to proceed as planned, but with the following modifications: 1)

planting will not be allowed to begin until no earlier than May 4; 2) the contractor must inform us of the cities/areas they travelled the week before arrival in Bayfield County; 3) the contractor must inform us of their Covid preparedness plan, including plans for obtaining gas, food and shelter for their employees; and 4) how they plan to address physical distancing while they are here. Staff administering this contract have been directed to have no direct contact with the planting crews. Trees will be staged on site and have contact with the crew bosses over the phone. If migrant crews are no longer an option, we have other alternatives, but at 5 times the cost. In that scenario, we wouldn't be able to complete all planting goals, but would still be able to accomplish something.

- b. Parks:
Credit card payments are still being discussed by the department. More on that in May.
- c. Trails and Recreation:
 - a) Motorized Trail Updates: We are in the quiet time between snowmobile season and ATV opener. Due to concerns related to Covid-19, the Feds will soon announce a complete Forest wide closure. This will result in the complete closure of all designated recreation on federal forest lands, including ATV trails. Since our trails connect with those on Federal land, this will also impact our opener. More on this topic below, but we will most likely delay our opening to coincide with the Federal closure. Unprecedented times.
 - b) Non-Motorized Trail Updates: Also the in between season for non-motorized trails, nothing new to report.
 - c) Yurt Updates: As a result of Covid-19, all yurts were closed starting on March 18 through the end of April. This resulted in the cancellation of over 30 reservations, covering about 40 nights. Based on how Covid-19 is playing out, J. Bodine recommends that the yurts remain closed through the middle of May. Otherwise, reservations for the summer are picking up. It's shaping up to be another very busy summer for the yurts, assuming we are able to re-open.
 - d) Events. No new events.
- d. Delta Landfill Update: Land Records and DATCP are in the process of establishing plans and narrative associated with returning the dump to pre-disaster conditions. Once the pre-disaster plans are developed, they will be sent, along with the preferred alternative and change in scope request, to Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM). WEM will review the request with FEMA to determine if the preferred alternative will be approved and if additional funds will be available. If approved, then we proceed with the repair, with the preferred alternative. If not approved, then we would have to either approach the state for funding options, pursue different funding sources, or proceed with a repair that might easily blow out again during the next big storm. Covid-19 will slow everything down, especially our request to change the scope. FEMA personnel are stretched thin on virus related projects and this will most likely get kicked lower down the priority list. Unfortunately, this might drag out into the summer and push this repair into 2021.

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

8. Bayfield County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan Revision

Chapters 100-600: received three additional comments, they were provided to the committee.

Chapters 700-900: did end up combining these two chapters. Access management and recreation are too closely related to separate. The beginning is focused on access management and roads/infrastructure.

The second half is more recreation based. New areas in this chapter: camping; addressing large gatherings (Rainbow Gathering) aesthetic management zones; has been expanded to include establishing timber sales and special management areas; focused on the Mt. Ashwabay and Cable recreation areas.

Committee would like clarification on one specific area mentioned in chapter 700. J. Bodine will update chapter/section to include clarification.

J. Bodine adds, if approved it will be available tomorrow to review. Expect more comments on this chapter next month.

***MOTION:** (Silbert, Fickbohm) approve draft chapter 700 as presented and make available online for public comment. All: Yes. Carried.*

9. COVID-19 Adjustments Covid-19 is forcing everyone to examine their programs in a different way, to determine if any changes are necessary. This issue has evolved almost daily and requires constant adjustments to protocols and procedures. In short, we need to make decisions on the fly, often which will have direct impacts on a particular program. J. Bodine will continue collaborating with the County Administrator, Health Department and other County Departments to make sound, educated decisions on the best approaches to managing each program in the face of this pandemic. Below is a summary of items that need to be addressed as a result.:

- a. Office Structure: All staff is working remotely. Lindley is in office once a week to process the mail; invoices, checks and other stuff that cannot be done from home.
- b. Yurt Closure: Yurts were closed on March 18 and will remain closed through April. We will reassess the situation closer to the end of April and determine if additional closure is necessary.
- c. Campground Closure including boat launches: There has been a lot of dialog the last week in regard to recreation in Bayfield County. The latest recommendation would be to proceed with delaying the opening of the campgrounds. Getting a press release out reiterating that all campgrounds and are closed until further notice. As far as boat launches, we state we are not installing boat launch ramps at launches and there is no fee at this time.
 - i. Seasonal camping: The recommendation is to keep the campgrounds closed until “further notice” If we end up closing longer than normal due to COVID-19 we should offer a partial, pro-rated refund to all seasonal campers. An actual figure would depend on the date of opening. There is also an assumption that some seasonal campers may not want to come back. If so, we would allow them to cancel their reservations, without penalty, giving them a deadline of April 30 to do so. In this situation, we would return their seasonal payments and site deposit. Their site would then be available for future rentals.
- d. Day Use Park Closure: For designated recreation sites, the recommendation is to keep them open but monitor them to make sure people are following social distancing orders. Signs will be installed reminding users of social distancing standards. Copy of the sign presented to committee.
- e. Trail Closure: Motorized trails are closed on county forest following suit with the Feds closure.

Some discussion from committed on RFP’s that were scheduled to come out this spring. No decision has been made regarding those yet.

***MOTION:** (Silbert, Fickbohm) approve Bodine’s suggestions regarding closures as camping closed until further notice, yurts are closed until further notice, day use trails remain open with social distancing signage, ATV trails closed, and docks not installed at launch sites. Give Bodine authorization to make changes as needed. All: Yes. Carried.*

10. Consent Agenda:

- a. Recreational Use Request: An email was supplied to the committee from Ryan Brady on behalf of the Chequamegon Bay Birding and Natural Festival Steering Committee. They are requesting the use of county land to host a few different birding events. This is something that has been going on for a while but hasn’t been formally addressed by the county. This event has been cancelled for this year due to Covid-19. Approving now would make it easier to approve next year, when the event resumes. J. Bodine recommends approval of the request.

b. Wildlife Opening Maintenance Request. Attached is the formal request from Todd Naas, DNR Wildlife Biologist. Every year, the DNR makes an annual request to continue maintaining game openings on the forest. This request is no different than any other. J. Bodine recommends approval.

c. Sand River Pit Storage. Shortly after the last meeting we were approached by a contractor, who will be doing road work in the area, about temporarily storing some material (primarily sand/gravel) at the Sand River Pit. The material would be stored through the construction season. Using Xcel's formula (they store power poles in the pit) for determining an appropriate monthly fee, it would equate to a value of about \$50.00/month. We'd work with the contractor to make sure the storage is out of the way and not impeding the normal use of the pit. I'd recommend we approve the request and develop a use agreement similar to what was developed with Xcel Energy and we charge \$50.00/month for storage of the material, contingent upon all material being removed before the start of winter (or arrangements being made to make sure the material will not be in the way of other scheduled winter activities i.e. dog sledding event).

e. Accomplishment Report. The 2019 accomplishment report was provided for the committee to view.

***MOTION:** (Silbert, Fickbohm) approve the four consent agenda items. All: Yes. Carried.*

11. Recognizing Harold Maki Upon His Retirement from the Bayfield County Board of Supervisors

***MOTION:** (Strand, Fickbohm) Acknowledge Harold's retirement, wish him well in the future and recommend this to the full county board for approval. All: Yes. Carried.*

Discussion on how beneficial Harold's input was to the committee. He will be missed.

12. Joseph LeBouton, DNR: Thanks Harold for his years of service.

The next Forestry and Parks Committee meeting has been rescheduled for **Monday, May 11 at 6:00 P.M.** We are unsure at this time if it will be held remotely or in person.

Meeting adjourned at 7:04 PM

Submitted by,
Lindley Mattson