

Members present: John Burke, Mark Chickering, Susan Haug, Greg Klos, Mike Lane

Excused: Dale Heil, Paul Klocko, Jeff Lawrence, Carol Mills, Gary Weiland, Marcell Wieloch

Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department staff present: Tom Lovlien - Forest Administrator

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Lane. A quorum was not present.

## **I. Minutes**

December 21, 2016 minutes were deferred until the next meeting.

## **II. New Business**

### **A. 2016 Forestry Division Annual Report**

Lovlien discussed some of the program highlights including revenue and expenses, certification, timber management, road and trail maintenance, wildlife management, recreation, public outreach and professional development.

### **B. 2016 County Forest Law Enforcement Report**

Lovlien reported that twelve tree stands and three tree cameras were seized, and seven citations were issued for various violations.

### **C. Forestry Division Expense/Revenue Report**

Lovlien reported that over the last ten years almost 4.2 million dollars in gross timber was sold. The timber revenue even flow budget is at \$245,000. Over last 10 years the program has net about \$70,000 and is a program that basically pays for itself.

### **D. Potential Land Acquisition – Town of Rib Mountain**

Lovlien said the owner offered to sell his 120 acre property to the County at the end of Laurel Road. It doesn't have a lot of upland, however, it does meet the objectives of the 15 year plan and it blocks in County forest and they are willing sellers. Lovlien approached the Rib Mountain Town Board to gauge their support of the County purchasing the property and they were unanimous in their decision to support the purchase. Questions were answered.

### **E. Winter Recreation Trail Program Update**

The cross-country ski trails and snowmobile trails are closed. Badger State Games had about 500 participants with \$1900 in revenue, the Snekkevic had 106 adults and 337 youth with \$1200 in revenue, and Special Olympics was cancelled. Burke felt there were a fair amount of out of town visitors at Nine Mile and even though it was short lived we probably had the best snow in the State compared to some of the other ski areas. Lovlien said it was the best we could expect for the winter we had.

**F. 2017-2019 State Budget: 2017 – 2019 Governors State Budget Proposals Affecting Forestry –** Lovlien said one of the main budget proposals affecting forestry is the elimination of the forestry mil tax which is about 90 million dollars a year. Lovlien listed the forestry programs the money is used for. He said the Governor is proposing to eliminate the tax completely and backfill it with general purpose revenue. For the next two years forestry programs will be fine but following that the state forestry dollars will be competing with transportation, health and human services, all the rest of the general purpose revenue dollars. WCFA is working on a segregated source of funding. Another budget item is the relocation of the Forestry Division north of Highway 29. The Chief State Forester is required to move north of Highway 29 by January 1, 2018 and the State will pay relocation expenses for any other forestry employee to relocate north of Highway 29 providing the Chief State Forester approves it and there is space and an office available. Another change is that the budget eliminates the prevailing wage requirements for State and County projects.

### **G. Bluegill Bay Park Fishing Pier Project**

Lovlien explained that two piers were pulled out of Bluegill Bay Park lagoon when it was dredged to improve

fishing opportunities and the piers were in too bad of shape to put back in. Staff checked with the State and was approved to change the scope of its County Conservation Aids project. It will partially fund a fishing pier at Bluegill Bay Park lagoon for 2017 and complete the Scholfield Park piers with 2018 dollars.

#### H. Drones in Parks and Forests Policy

Lovlien said the Federal and State government have finalized rules for drones taking both safety and privacy issues into consideration. Now it's time for land managers to figure out what's appropriate for parks and forests. People should be afforded some amount of privacy when they are out recreating. Corp Counsel and the City Attorney are looking at what other municipalities are doing right now and considering rules and new or expanded ordinances. There are some different classifications including recreational and commercial use of drones and different types of enforcement. Some rules already in place are that people can't fly drones when they are intoxicated, can't fly them over people, can't fly them out of sight, and can't fly them 400 feet above ground level. Lovlien wanted Committee members to let staff know if they are seeing them in the parks and forests. Lane said there are rules as far as being a certain distance from airports. He thought that if they have to stay within sight he didn't anticipate a problem at Nine Mile. Burke said a lot of the units come with an automatic return and if it gets out of sight or if it goes too far it will automatically come back as well. The schools mostly follow the WIAA guidelines that say no drones over their competitions. WIAA does that partly for protecting their media rights and partly for safety issues as well. At events he could see possible conflicts. Lovlien said there was a drone that filmed Badger State Games but the owner had a license, worked with the County, was given permission, and the racers were told there would be a drone. Lane had concerns about anti-hunters and harassment using drones.

#### I. Fee for Undesignated Camping Permits

Lovlien said there were 66 permits issued last year. These permits are free and available at the last minute and they have been exponentially increasing every year. He believes the permit system should be improved. He had inquired what other Counties were doing and 13 of them charge no fee, 10 charge a fee, 5 didn't respond and one county doesn't have a permit system at all. There were various ranges for fees from \$5 a night up to 14 nights, up to \$12 a year, to no fees. The Marathon County Forestry Committee has approved a permit with a \$15 fee for one night up to fourteen nights per camping unit and a one day lead time. Lovlien noted that fifty of the sixty six permits were issued for Nine Mile Forest Unit.

K. Member Items – Burke mentioned there was a well written article in the Journal Sentinel titled “Wausau’s Nine Mile County Forest is a Cross-Country Skiing Gem”. He also mentioned that the County purchased a new light groomer this year which will be really nice for managing light snow conditions. Lane mentioned that Eric Loebner is the new person in charge of the State Wildlife Division and he has heard good things about him.

#### Old Business

##### A. Update on Land Acquisition in the Town of Hewitt for County Forest

Lovlien said an appraisal was done on this property located off of Rocky Road and Highway 52. Once the appraisal is certified Lovlien can start negotiating with the owner of the property, write an offer to purchase and take that back to County Board for approval. A Phase 1 Environmental screen was done on the property and came back clean. Lovlien also received a title commitment on the property. He said there is money available in the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship fund up until June 30 and as long as he gets an offer to purchase signed and the money is encumbered they can close after June 30.

##### B. County Deer Advisory Council Upcoming Spring Meetings

Lane is Chairman for this council which meets a couple of times a year to determine antlerless quotas. This year they also met to discuss and give comments about the new CWD plan which the State is now reviewing. The next meeting is March 23<sup>rd</sup> where they will discuss the preliminary deer quota. They will discuss how to maintain the population. Once they come up with a preliminary quota it will be out on the DNR's website and public comments will be taken. Another meeting will be held on April 19 where they will come up with a final recommendation and

that will go to the DNR Board. Lane said that anyone is welcome at their meetings to give input.

C. County Forester Hiring Update

Lovlien said that Joe Tucker had been hired as the County forester. Tucker is originally from the Waupaca area and has previously worked for the DNR.

**IV. 2017 Meeting Dates – June 6 or 7, September 21 and December 20, 2017 at 6:00 pm.** – Lovlien will poll committee members before the June meeting and pick the date that best fits.

**V. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 7:05 pm.

Thomas Lovlien  
Secretary