

Members present: John Burke, Mark Chickering, Susan Haug, Dale Heil, Greg Klos, Mike Lane, Paul Klocko, Jeff Lawrence, Carol Mills, Marcell Wieloch

Excused: Gary Weiland

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Lane.

I. Minutes

Motion by Wieloch to approve December 21, 2016 minutes and March 8, 2017. **Motion carried.**

II. New Business

A. Introduction of County Forester Joe Tucker

Tucker said he is from the Waupaca area. He graduated from the UW-Stevens Point and worked at the DNR where he was forester. Currently, he is setting up timber sales and getting to know the County forests. Members welcomed him.

B. 2017 Planned Timber Harvest Activity at Nine Mile Forest

Lovlien said there are two sales that are planned to be harvested in Nine Mile this summer or fall. The first sale has a potential of affecting Main Street and other trails. Lovlien will let the user groups know when that sale is active. The second sale has been mostly cut already located in the little Alps ski trail. Lawrence said it is on their list to get done this summer. Concerning future sales at Nine Mile, Tucker said he was out this last winter assessing red pine that was scheduled for thinning near the chalet which is about 71 acres. It is going to impact three areas of mountain biking trails one to the west, one just south of chalet, and one east of Red Bud Road. One way to mitigate the impact is to have the logger's complete one zone at a time then move on to the next so that all sections of trail are not shut down at the same time. Chickering said he would send out a reminder to his members shortly beforehand for them to be aware of the logging and to stay out of the way. Lovlien said it is likely this sale won't be active until next spring/summer 2018. Haug questioned all of the downed branches left next to Red Bud Road. Tucker said that while not aesthetically pleasing now it will disappear in a little while. They leave some of that so the nutrients break down to replenish the soil. Lovlien said they would monitor it and do something in the future if needed.

C. 2017 Scheduled Nine Mile Events

Lovlien said an Adventure Race took place on May 27. The Wisconsin Endurance Mountain Bike Series is on June 9 and 10. During some of these bigger races the race organizer takes care of camping. No undesignated camping permits are allowed during these events. The Wausau 24 Mountain Bike Race is July 28-30 and cross-country running season begins with Mosinee High School on August 29 and Marathon High School on August 31. The Ragnar Running Relay Race is September 21-24 then Edgar High School cross-country on September 26 and DC Everest High School cross country on September 28. Randy Curtis teaches ATV safety classes on various days from May through October in the north parking lot at Nine Mile. There are also parties, weddings, and graduations in the chalet. Burke did not believe there were any additional cross-country races because there are no sectionals and they probably won't have any conference meets.

D. September 2017 Subcommittee Appointments

Lovlien said Klocko, Wieloch, Lawrence, Weiland and Heil all have terms expiring September 1, 2017. Those members should let Lovlien know if they would like to stay on the Committee by July 1st otherwise he will put out a media notice requesting any interested parties to fill out an application for consideration.

E. Wausau and Marathon County Facebook Page

Lovlien said the Department officially has a Facebook page and is starting to put information out. The younger generation tends to follow this more than newspapers or television.

F. Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department Website "Hits"

Lovlien said this year there were almost 230,000 visitors with 150,000 unique hits. This Department has the largest number of website hits by far in the City and County. Staff is looking at potentially redesigning its website in the future. It's a little non-friendly in trying to find information. There have been thousands of website hits for cross-county skiing/snowshoeing, snowmobiling, biking and hunting. People are getting good information from the website. Discussion on County addressing system followed.

G. New Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department Logo

Lovlien said the Department needed to rebrand itself with a new logo promoting active lifestyles. It will be on Department stationery, trucks, etc. to market our lands, facilities and programs.

H. Article – White Birch Thieves Illegally Cutting Saplings in Wisconsin and Minnesota

Lovlien said this has become a real big problem in northern Wisconsin and Minnesota. People are starting to go along the sides of the roads and cutting birch trees down to turn into ornamental items. A lot of people have been caught in Washburn County and northern Minnesota. Lovlien said if members or any members of their groups see anything they should report it and not approach these individuals. Lovlien noted there is not a lot of birch in Marathon County.

I. Member Items

Lovlien said a CWD article was in the Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel. He said back in 2013 they found a buck that tested positive for CWD on a whitetail deer farm in southeastern Marathon County. Since then, 24 more deer have tested positive and the disease is spreading. Lovlien thought the whole article was pretty eye opening on how CWD is expanding in the State and could get more serious going into the future. Discussion on CWD followed. Wieloch mentioned the summer Badger State Games will be starting with archery this Saturday and Sunday. He said there are a lot of good athletes to watch.

Old Business

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

Lovlien said the County Board has approved this purchase and the land will close on June 27th. Lovlien currently has a contract from the DNR for 50% of purchase and incidental costs. The land was purchased for the appraised value. This is a great purchase for the County which will be able to manage the timber in perpetuity.

D. Update on the Potential Land Acquisition in the Town of Rib Mountain

Lovlien said this 120 acres borders Nine Mile Forest Unit at the end of Laurel Road. Lovlien went to the Town of Rib Mountain and they support the County purchasing this property. Lovlien will be taking this to the Forestry/Recreation Committee, Environmental Resource Committee and Finance and Property Committee to try to get a resolution approved to apply for a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant that would pay for half of this purchase.

E. Final County Deer Advisory Council Antlerless Quota Recommendations

Lane said the County Deer Advisory Council has voted to eliminate all extra bonus permits in Marathon County. People will still be able to get an antlerless permit with every license just not the bonus tags. He believes this may surprise some people which may lead to greater attendance at these meetings in the future. Lovlien said Marathon County may be split into different units in the future as it is too big of a County to manage the different deer habitats the same.

F. 2017 – 2019 State Budget Update on Forestry Programs

Lovlien said the Forestry Mil Tax which pays for all State forestry and some County forestry programs is being eliminated. In the future forestry will be competing for general purpose revenues and Lovlien is unsure how it will fare against other programs such as transportation and education. A person will save \$25.00 on their property tax

bill on a \$150,000 dollar home. Lovlien is concerned eliminating this tax will hurt the forest industry in the long run. Lovlien said another item in the budget proposed that the Chief State Forester move north of Highway 29 by January 1, 2018. Other forestry employees can stay in Madison or move north if there is already an office available and they have approval from the Chief State Forester.

D. Policy on Drones in State Park Properties

Lovlien said the State is not allowing drones on their State properties except for the Richard Bong Area. He said Marathon County was waiting to see what the State would do before they start considering County policy on drones. Questions were raised why only some specific State Forest properties were listed but not all of them. Lovlien said he would check and get back to them. Wieloch noted that the Richard Bong State Recreation Area is an old deserted military airfield and years ago a model airplane group contracted with the State and has been flying model airplanes there.

IV. 2017 Meeting Dates – September 20 and December 20, 2017 at 6:00 pm.

V. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm.

Thomas Lovlien
Secretary