

Members present: John Burke, Mark Chickering, Dale Heil, Paul Klocko, Mike Lane, Susan Stomieroski, Gary Weiland

Excused: Susan Haug, Greg Klos, Ryan Schleifer, Marcell Wieloch

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

Others present: Pat Peckham, Lucy Nitz, Brent Brye, news media

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

I. Minutes

Motion by Burke to approve the December 19, 2018 minutes. Motion **carried**.

III. New Business

A. Wausau Nordic Ski Club Proposal to Add Snowmaking Capabilities at Nine Mile County Forest

Polley said the Nordic ski club is proposing to add snowmaking capabilities at Nine Mile County Forest. Staff is looking for feedback from the respective user groups. This proposal will go through multiple Committees and County Board. The proposal is to make snow along 3.7 km of lighted ski trail to open earlier in the season. This year Nine Mile did not open for skiing until January 24th. The idea is that the snowmaking would take about two weeks to get an 18 inch base and have the trails open around December 15th or earlier and close April 1st. The Nordic Ski Club would like to move this forward and start to fundraise as soon as possible so that snowmaking could begin for the 2020-2021 season. Staff has questions regarding operations because currently it is also involved with making snow at Sylvan Tubing Hill, working on ice rinks and snow removal operations at the same time. Burke discussed the snow making system. He said water would be pumped through underground pipes that would be buried adjacent to the trail serving water heads that would be above the trail. Getting people skiing sooner could increase the December attendance and enhance the overall consistency so that events, school and company outings could be run on a more regular basis. He believes the inconsistency has hurt events and season pass sales. They believe they can use the snow throughout the winter and also use it for snow farming to supplement other parts of the trail as needed. They are looking at a system with the majority of costs upfront so that the operations would be cheaper to run. The anticipation is that ski club will fundraise to get the infrastructure built and then decide how to transition over to the County. He felt that based on what their group has seen in other areas that they should be able to offset most of, if not all of the operating cost increases of making the snow with additional revenue. Future maintenance costs were brought up and the lifespan of the system was discussed. Burke felt that Wausau is in a great area to be able to make snow and capitalize on the south metro markets coming north for December skiing.

Lane said there is a lot of participation for the muzzle loader and the four-day antlerless deer seasons and questioned where the equipment would be located. Burke said they would start near the chalet and build out from there and it was likely that a lot of the snowmaking activity would be at night. Burke said the area being looked at isn't heavily used for deer hunting because it is close in to proximity to the chalet. Lane thought hunters may be concerned about noise from the pumps but if they are located closer to the chalet it shouldn't be as much of an issue. Burke said bringing in power is cost prohibitive so they would most likely rent a generator. Lovlien said the location recommended for the pond is right by the chalet which would also be better from a maintenance perspective. Currently the chalet and ski trail season does not open until after the antlerless hunt which varies between December 8th and 12th. Skiing wouldn't be open during the four day antlerless hunt but there would be snowmaking during the muzzleloader hunt and bow hunting seasons beginning no earlier than the last day of gun deer season. He believes the nearer it is to the chalet the less of a conflict there will be with the hunting community. Lane questioned how the pond would be filled. Burke said the anticipation is that they would be able to fill it with naturally occurring runoff, rain, and pumping over a period of time. The pond is recommended to have a gradual entry into the water for safety purposes. Heil mentioned some concerns that loggers might have regarding the system. Burke said provisions would be made to identify the water heads which would not be right out by the trail and that the consultant could address concerns about logging equipment and the depth of the water lines. Lovlien said that there is already a seasonal restriction when they don't harvest in the area which would not change.

Polley said from this Committee's perspective, staff wants to hear the impacts of the proposal which they will take to Forestry Committee and Park Commission. The County Board will make a decision based on the long-term maintenance and staffing costs and what impact it has to current staffing and budget. Polley asked members to take the provided information to their groups and to then offer comments and questions to Lovlien by April 15. Burke said there are good examples of these systems around the Midwest where this has been done and felt it would be beneficial to the Wausau area. Polley asked that instead of having this group give a recommendation, she thought it was more important to have comments

and information about how it affects and impacts the user groups.

B. 2018 County Forest 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.

C. 2018 County Forest Law Enforcement Report

Lovlien reported that twelve tree stands were seized and five citations were written for various violations.

D. 2009-2018 County Forest Division Expense/Revenue Report

Lovlien reported that over the last ten years about four million dollars in gross timber was sold. Net revenue is the amount to the County after the twenty-percent payment to the State for interest free loans and ten-percent payment to the townships. The County sets an even-flow budget because timber revenues fluctuate each year depending on weather, markets, etc. Timber sale contracts are typically two-three years.

E. 2019 Spring Timbersales Being Advertised for Purchase

Staff has held off offering the timber sales until April with a bid opening in May because of snow conditions. Three hundred and ninety-seven acres will be offered on six sales and all were reviewed by the Subcommittee. Lovlien discussed the two sales that will be in Nine Mile. The first sale had been previously discussed with the ski group because it is along a ski trail. The second sale is along Springbrook Road and consists of 80 year old red pine that will be clear cut and replanted. Questions were answered.

F. 2019 – 2021 Governors State Budget Proposals Affecting Forestry Programs

Lovlien said the Governor is proposing an additional \$165,000 for County forest grants to help administer the statewide County forest program. Lovlien said if they can maintain funding or get a slight increase that will be good because the program is competing with other agencies using general purpose revenue. The previous Governor eliminated the Forestry mil tax which was a segregated account for forestry funding.

G. Winter Recreation Trail Program Update – The early season lacked snow and had some extremely cold weather, and rain. The ski trails opened January 24th and the snowmobile trails also opened at the end of January. It has been a good season since then.

H. 2018 High School Mountain Bike Race Participation and Revenue

Lovlien reported there were 541 participants and the revenue was \$3,319.00 from the Mountain Bike Race that was held last October.

I. Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department Mission Statement

Polley reported that staff is currently working on updating its mission statement so that it incorporates all of the core services it provides and aligns with the County and City.

J. Member Items of Importance

Polley said the Department is updating its County Outdoor Recreation Plan this year. She asked members to take a recreation survey and pass it on to others. At the end of April there will be a public open house where people can also provide feedback. Lovlien mentioned that the plan has ties to forestry and recreation and he asked members to consider taking the survey.

Lovlien discussed changes being proposed to the Chapter 16 Code of Ordinances. The ground blind and waterfowl blind regulations will be changed to more closely match the State regulations because the County is having issues with people leaving blinds up or boats on County forest land year round.

II. Old Business

A. County Deer Advisory Council Meeting March 20, 2019 to Set Preliminary Antlerless Quotas for the 2019 Season – Lane said that the meeting will be held at 7:00 pm at 210 River Drive on March 20. The group will set a preliminary

recommendation on the quotas for antlerless tags on private and public land. There will be a presentation by a DNR biologist, discussion, and time for public comments. The recommendation goes to the DNR then there is time for public comments. At the April 22nd meeting a final recommendation will be made.

B. Update on Land Acquisitions in the Town of Hewitt - Lovlien said appraisals have been completed and are at the DNR who reviews and certifies them. Once they are certified he can begin negotiations with the two land owners. If all of the necessary committees approve it, the land could come into County ownership this fall.

C. 2021 – 2035 County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan Revision – Lovlien reported that there is a Subcommittee of County forest administrators developing a template each County forest can work off and then each County can add specific information. The last time the plan was developed the Citizen Advisory Subcommittee met every month but he feels that this time just an extra meeting or two should suffice. He would like to have more public participation where people can comment at an open house and public hearing. Everyone has a chance to say what they would like to see in the plan, although not everything makes it into the plan due to resource and budget limitations. Lovlien hopes to get the plan to County Board by September 2020.

D. Request for Additional Services Evaluation Form – Polley explained that the form is to be used by user groups if they want to do any kind of improvements. It helps in moving the process along.

IV. Remaining 2019 Meeting Dates – June 5, September 18 and December 18, 2019 at 6:00 pm.

V. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Burke. Motion **carried**. Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Thomas Lovlien
Secretary