

Members present: John Burke, Mark Chickering, Susan Haug, Dale Heil, Paul Klocko, Greg Klos, Mike Lane, Ryan Schleifer, Susan Stomieroski, Marcell Wieloch

Excused: Gary Weiland

Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Rec, and Forestry Department staff present: Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator, Jamie Polley-Parks, Recreation and Forestry Director, Andrea Larson-Executive Director IronBull, Pat Peckham

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

I. Minutes

Motion by Burke to approve the September 18, 2019 minutes. Motion **carried** unanimously.

II. New Business

B. 2020 County Forest and Wildlife Work Plans

Lovlien gave highlights on upcoming work which includes timber management, road and trail maintenance, conservation aids projects, administration, GIS work and professional development. There have been some retirements in the Department and two recreation officers and a .6 FTE ATV/Snowmobile Coordinator have been hired. One of the recreation officer positions was funded 80% through State grants. Lovlien mentioned that the Department received a \$31,000 grant to do invasive species work for oak regeneration, a large number of culverts have been replaced this year because of storm events and wet weather, staff continues to work on purchasing additional lands, and the priority in 2020 will be to finalize the 15-Year County Forest Comprehensive Land Use plan.

C. 2020 County Conservation Aids Project – Duane Corbin Shooting Range Park

Lovlien explained that the Forestry/Recreation Committee approved a conservation aids project to improve the stumps and wooden tables that people sit on to site in their rifles at the shooting range. Department staff will be fabricating the precast benches and seats this winter. Future projects include shooting range retaining wall work, City of Schofield boat landing, and replacing asphalt at the D.C. Everest Park boat landing.

D. 2019 Fall Timber Bid Opening and Summary

Lovlien reported that storms blew over thousands of acres of trees in Langlade and Portage County. Those counties have been setting up salvage timber sales so there is a lot of wood on the market right now. The other issue is that winter only work is put up for bid in the fall. The Department did not receive a lot of bids at its last two bid openings. Four of the five sales sold. The remaining sale can be sold over the counter. This spring the Department will offer more summer/fall ground and hopes to receive better prices. Discussion followed.

E. County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2021-2035 Survey Results

Lovlien said input on the plan was taken over a month long period and less than 10% responded to the surveys. He listed some themes: There is general support for sustainable forestry and replanting; support for keeping forests open to all multiple uses including all recreational opportunities like hunting, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing; concerns over excessive development and that protections need to be in place to minimize environmental degradation; concerns over invasive species and how to manage them; expand recreational opportunities that allow for more mountain biking, winter fat biking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing; general support for snowmaking capabilities for skiing at Nine Mile; some suggested adding new trails others say no new trails; limiting additional motorized use of the forest; conserving and protecting forests for all species of wildlife; and balancing all uses on county forests. Some people want more and some people want less and staff's job is to develop a plan that protects the forest, compromises and balances all of the different uses while following the intent of the County Forest Law. Lovlien told Stomieroski that comments will be taken throughout the process as she thought she had responded. Schleifer agreed with the response about good forest management and that the County should consider becoming FSC certified. Haug was proud that over ten percent of the Bird Club members responded. Burke liked the comment about reducing oak trees within 20 yards of ski trails. Lane noticed that someone responded that the County hadn't done anything about buckthorn but he thought they worked on that yearly. Lovlien agreed and said they treat it when they find it.

F. Review Revisions to the Marathon County Comprehensive Land Use Plan Chapters 400-600

Lovlien discussed Chapter 400 which he said is mostly statutory language about forest ownership, landowner goals, policies on acquisition of lands, financing of land acquisitions, entering and withdrawal of lands under County Forest Law, land

surveying, property rights conveyances, and tax deed land. Chapter 500 is how the County deals with timber sales. It includes information about field preparation, objectives, methods of bidding, prospectus, awarding sales, bonds, contracts, contract parties, performance bonds, dealing with contract violations, title to timber, payment schedule, training, removal, BMP's, soil disturbance, erosion control, liability, scaling and conversion factors, utilization standards, timber theft, encroachments, special uses, how the County deals with mining and prospecting, sanitary landfills, military maneuvers, public utilities, cellular communication towers, treaty rights: gathering miscellaneous forest products. Chapter 600 deals with protection, fire control, our cooperation with the DNR on fire control who is responsible for any fires, debris burning, campfires, prescribed burning, and control of forest pests and pathogens, and invasive species. **Motion** by Wieloch to accept the revisions to Chapters 400 – 600 and forward to the Forestry/Recreation Committee. **Motion carried** unanimously.

A. Request by IronBull to Use Nine Mile Snowmobile Trail for the Red Granite Grinder Gravel Bike Race –
Andrea Larson – Executive Director

Andrea Larson, Executive Director said she had sought approval for their first race which was after the October 15th closing date for having bikes at Nine Mile and it had been granted on a one year trial basis. That race went well and she is asking permission for bikes to be allowed at Nine Mile on October 17th, 2020 on the same snowmobile trail route they used last year. The racers would be out of Nine Mile by around 10:30am. Lovlien said staff is comfortable with approving this IronBull event on a yearly basis on the Saturday after the 15th on the same race course. Lovlien said they want a successful race and thought this route would have the least effect on all the rest of the users after October 15th. Larson discussed the entire race course and said the featured sections such as Nine Mile are a real benefit to the race. Lovlien said this item will go to the Forestry Committee in January. **Motion** by Burke to approve the request by IronBull to Use Nine Mile Snowmobile Trail for the Red Granite Grinder Gravel Bike Race on a yearly basis. **Motion carried** unanimously.

G. 2020 Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department Budget

Polley said the parks budget that was submitted to the County administrator reflected a 2.31 % increase over 2019 which was mostly a cost of living increase. She discussed personnel and restructuring of the Department. She said there were some increases with fuel, janitorial services, utilities, and insurances but overall costs remained about the same. Revenue increased by \$45,000 mainly through camping, firewood, and dumping fees. Shelters and ice rentals were up. She mentioned the enterprise funds have certain thresholds they need to meet and those were met for the most part. She mentioned the Department received some improvements funded through CIP. They include replacing County Park playgrounds, a controller for the ice arenas, and new hockey boards. Discussion followed.

H. Wausau 24 and NICA Bike Race Participation and Revenue
Lovlien reported that the Wausau 24 Race had 458 mountain bike and 47 trail run participants. The NICA High School Mountain Bike Race had 212 campers and 706 racers. Revenues were around \$10,000. Both races were well run and staff expects them to return next year.

I. Request by Wausau School District for Use of Nine Mile for Conference Cross Country Meet Oct.17th, 2020
Polley said the Wausau West Athletic Director contacted her about a request for the conference cross-country meet that they are required to hold. All the schools in the conference are required to host this conference meet and it always falls the third Saturday in October. It rotates and staff found that the last one was held in 2016 so it didn't come to light when staff was drafting the use regulations that this was a race that should be kept on the schedule. The four schools that had used Nine Mile in the past were Edgar, East, West and Everest. Edgar has moved their course so they don't have a need to have their race at Nine Mile. East, West, and Everest would like to hold the race there and if allowed it would be three years out of a seven year period. Lovlien said the regulations read four cross-country running races at Nine Mile per year total, so there would be three before Oct. 15th, typically on week days, and this one would fall on the Saturday following Oct. 15th. This race has been allowed in the past and it would be held on trails around the chalet from 10am to 12:30pm with set-up on the same day. This event would fall on the same day as the gravel grinder bike race. This race would count as one of the four cross country races so staff would put a notice out to all the schools that they would need to get the conference race on the books first and then the other races. Years when there is no conference meet it would be on a first come basis for the four races before October 15th. Lovlien said the schools really need a place and it has been allowed before. From a staff perspective its minimal impact and will help the high schools out. Burke thought that Mosinee and Marathon School which are in different conferences may request as well. Discussion followed. **Motion** by Burke to accept use of Nine Mile on the

Saturday following October 15th for cross-country conference meets as required by the Wisconsin Valley Conference for those teams that are involved. Motion **carried** unanimously.

J. Discussion on Facilities Opening Dates and Posting on County and Social Media

Lovlien said it has been many years since there was snow to open Nine Mile and other facilities early. Staff would like have the County website as the place where everyone goes to for opening dates. To let the Department take the lead and then others could share that same information. Staff usually works with user groups on determining when trails are opened and will continue to do so. A contact person from the user groups could even see what information the County is going to post prior to it doing so. Burke thought that developing a recreational site apart from the County site, selling advertising to support the maintenance of it, and actively managing that site would be a good resource that everyone could link to for current information. Burke said their club gets a lot of questions about Nine Mile and its conditions and has to be careful not to overstep. It would be a lot nicer if they could have a link to something that was kept up to the moment and dynamic. He thought that a lot of the tourist industry would support something like that. Stomieroski thought it would be nice to have a calendar of events occurring at Nine Mile. Discussion followed.

K. Winter Recreational Program Update

Lovlien reported that the Nine Mile ski trails are in excellent condition. He commented on the department policy that went into effect because of snow before the end of the gun deer antlerless season. Staff had groomed at night and worked to get the trails open and the lights were turned on at night so people could ski at night. Polley said if there is early snow next year she would like to do better education at Nine Mile to let people know there is hunting in progress. To have signage plus the recreation deputies out there to help make people aware that they should be wearing some orange.

L. Member Items

Haug said the Wausau Bird Club participated in the annual Christmas bird count on Saturday. They saw a lot of rough legged hawks and northern shrike. The numbers of chickadees and nuthatches are down.

II. Old Business

A. Update on the Proposal to Add Snowmaking at Nine Mile Forest - Burke

Burke said water was found at a third test hole that was dug at Nine Mile. They are at a point where they need to reconvene as to what the next steps are to continue to move this forward. Polley thought they were waiting for a recommendation based on a report from Tom Meier the engineer.

B. Status of the Kerswill, Romatowski and Ceres County Forest Land Acquisitions

Lovlien explained that the 200-acre Kerswill property just to the west of the current Harrison-Hewitt Forest Unit has been purchased. Through State grants and being able to use match property it cost the County only about \$6,000 to buy that 200 acres. Lovlien said the appraisal came back on the Romatowski property and he is waiting to hear back from the property owners. Lovlien said he still waiting for the DNR to certify an appraisal on the Ceres property. Questions were answered.

C. 2019 Deer Season Harvest and Activity Levels on County Forest Land

Lovlien said there was some activity on the County Forest but it's hard to say exactly how much. Staff is going to continue to follow the policy not to open ski trails during the day until after the last gun deer hunting season if they get early snow. Lane thought there had been a lot of interest in muzzle loading. He didn't see as much during the antlerless season but thought it was tough to get around and thought that may have curtailed it a little bit this year. Discussion followed on deer management ideas such as earn-a-buck and starting the gun season earlier.

D. Ragnar Trail Relay Running Race Summary and New Three Year Contract

Lovlien said there were about 2800 to 2900 runners in the September race and they paid the County \$21,300.00 for 2019. Their contract has been re-negotiated and next year we will receive \$11.20 per participant. If there are 2700 racers next year it will be over \$30,000. That is a significant revenue for the Nine Mile enterprise budget. They also receive ten percent of the food proceeds so they could be looking at over \$32,000. The event has pretty low impacts on the resource and the group cleans up very well.

E. Final Approved Nine Mile Event and Use Policy

Lovlien said the changes include the exception for West, East and Everest high schools to host their conference meets. The other change is additional language that says charging fees for vehicle parking or admission fees for spectators to any events is prohibited and also if there is a conflict of multiple applications for the same weekend or events that the Park Commission would have the final say on that because they have the operational responsibilities for events at Nine Mile.

IV. 2020 Tentative Meeting Dates – March 18, June 3, September 16, and December 16, 2020 at 6:00 pm.

V. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Klos. Motion **carried**. Meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.

Thomas Lovlien
Secretary