

Marathon County Forest Citizens' Advisory Subcommittee

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

Excused: John Burke, Marcell Wieloch, Gary Weiland

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

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

I. Minutes

Motion by Chickering to approve the March 18, 2020 minutes. Motion **carried** unanimously.

II. New Business**A. September 2020 Subcommittee Appointments**

Lovlien reported that Mark Chickering, Greg Klos, Mike Lane, Susan Haug, John Burke and Susan Stomieroski terms expire on September 1st, 2020. Members should let Lovlien know by the end of July if they would like to remain on the Committee.

C. 2020 Spring Timber Sale Summary

Sixteen bids were received from five bidders and all of the sales sold for a value of about \$214,000. Staff has worked with all of the high bidders before except for one.

D. Review Changes to Marathon County Forest 15 Year Plan Timeline

Lovlien said because of changes in relation to when the standing committees meet, the plan timeline was altered. On June 30 the Forestry/Recreation Committee, Park Commission and Environmental Resource Committee are all going to review Chapters 1000 and 2000. Assuming they are approved, the thirty day public comment period required by State Statute will occur between July 13 and August 14. A public listening session will be held at the August 4th Forestry Committee meeting. The plan will then go to the DNR and come back for the County's final approvals in November. The Plan will be in place by January 2021.

E. Wausau Bird Club Receives Grant for Barker-Stewart Island

Haug reported that the Bird Club received a grant for \$500 for restoring native plantings and installing educational signage. She mentioned that every year the Club participates in a bird-a-thon and they thought donations would be down but instead they are way past their goal.

F. Forest Certification Audit August 3 – 7, 2020

Lovlien gave a brief explanation of how the forest certification audits have been done in the past. He said because of the Covid situation this year the County is going to have a virtual field audit. This could be a little more time consuming as it will occur over a three week period instead of one day. Lovlien said staff asked that it be postponed but the request was denied.

G. Member Items

Lane reported the County Deer Advisory Committee has come up with the same proposals as they had the year before. Items that could possibly be addressed this fall include opening up hunting for white deer and splitting Marathon County. Schleifer commented on Verso Corporation's decision to idle their Duluth and Wisconsin Rapids paper mills and the huge impact it will have on the wood products industry. He said the Wisconsin Rapids mill alone consumes about 1.4 million tons of wood a year and this directly impacts about 900 employees at the mill and 500 wood suppliers. Lengthy discussion occurred about all of the impacts of the closure. Lovlien said from a County perspective there is a lot of uncertainty. The County isn't in the business to make tons of money on the timber program but he hopes in the long run we will still be able to manage the County's forests and keep them healthy.

II. Old Business

A. Status on the Romatowski County Forest Land Acquisition

Lovlien said he has been working on this over a year and recently received notification from the owners that they are not interested in selling the property anymore.

B. Update on the Nine Mile Forest Mountain Bike Improvement Project

Lovlien said two phases of the mountain bike project will be done this year and the third phase will be done next year. Quotes were solicited and one was received from Epic Trail Design. The project will be started in early July and will end before October 15. Some of the trails will be closed while the project is under construction.

C. Update on Proposal to Add Snowmaking at Nine Mile Forest

Lovlien said the organizers of the snowmaking proposal have decided to put this project on hold.

D. Cancellations at Marathon County Parks and Forestry Facilities Related to the Pandemic

Polley said all of the parks and forests have remained open for people to walk through and enjoy the outdoors. Some amenities are closed such as the City pools and the Marathon Park Splashpad. Marathon County and the City of Wausau feel the Department needs to set an example and follow the Health Department and CDC recommendations. Other amenities are open and have signs with social distancing recommendations. Facilities are available to rent and facilities that had leases or agreements are allowed to move forward because they are essentially businesses that can make their own decisions. A lot of the large events have cancelled. Youth organized sports are now allowed to use the facilities with submission of a plan about how they will follow social distancing guidelines. Polley said the County is looking at a 5.6 million dollar deficit for 2020. The Department has two full time vacancies and has reduced its part time staff which will help reduce the deficit. The deficit could be larger in 2021 so priority based budgeting and fees and the ways some of the parks are operated will be reviewed. Lovlien said it will be important to show support for the Department in the future. Polley thought it was eye opening for some of the elected officials to see during this time that people are turning to the public facilities as one of the best resources to get out of their homes and enjoy the summer. Campgrounds have been extremely busy this summer.

II. New Business

B. Review Proposed Revisions to the Marathon County Comprehensive Land Use Plan Chapters 1000 – 2000

Lovlien said Chapter 1000 has information on County forest maps, tables, forest law, ordinances, permits, use agreements, policies, contracts, facilities, reports, miscellaneous maps, and brochures. Lovlien mentioned the maps for potential acquisition are by no means all going to be acquired. The County has a strategic plan that prioritizes additional land to block in and expand the County Forest Units. The last map is for consideration of a potential new forest unit. There may be an opportunity in the Town of Halsey for a possible expansion. Questions were answered. Chapter 2000 covers annual silviculture needs, the work plan's objective, policy and budget, accomplishment reports, reforestation, timber stand improvement, recreational developments, wildlife projects, forest types, harvesting, flora/fauna, recreational use, roads and access. Lovlien mentioned that there is not much opportunity to develop more trails especially at Nine Mile Forest Unit. The Department will be taking care of the trails that are already in place and get them in the best shape. Lovlien appreciated Committee's help with reviewing the plan. **Motion** by Schleifer to recommend approval of chapters 1000 – 2000 of the Marathon County Forest 15-Year Land Use Plan to Forestry/Recreation Committee. Motion **carried** unanimously.

IV. Remaining 2020 Meeting Dates – September 16, and December 16, 2020 at 6:00 pm.

V. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Klos. Motion **carried** unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:23pm.

Thomas Lovlien
Secretary