

**ISABELLA COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, September 4, 2024**

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**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Vasold at 6:02 pm.

**COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT**

Bob Busch, Bob Willoughby, Craig Clingan, Frank Engler, John Dinse, Randy Vasold and Ruth Barrett

**COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT**

Ann Silker, Jeremy Murphy and Jordan Bruursema

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Director Alexis Hansen, Parks Assistant Supervisor Emma Vanacker, Administrative Assistant Nichole Manley, Park Staff Member Kathy Vanderkolk, Janel Shaner, Robert Zuker, Dean Gage, Mark Little, DeAnn Little, Marylou Essex, Jillaine Marquiss, Gene Essex, Randy King, Kelly King, Mark Wisneski, Kelli Wisneski, Dick & Jenny Gordert, John & Renay Martinski and JD Partridge.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

The Director noted that Discussion of Coldwater Campground Concerns should be moved from New Business to Citizens Comment section. **Agenda was accepted as amended (Willoughby/Barrett).**

**INTRODUCTIONS**

The Director, Parks Supervisor, Assistant Parks Supervisor and Parks Board introduced themselves.

**MINUTES**

The August 2024 Board Meeting Minutes were reviewed. **It was moved (Dinse/Willoughby) to approve the August 2024 Meeting Minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**

**GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- Brining – Brining was done once this year as it is done in the past, there are concerns with how dusty the campground and neighborhood get. Will look into brining an additional time each summer.
- Barking Dogs – One site comes around 4 times each year with two small dogs who bark “non-stop.” The policy regarding barking dogs should be enforced more.
- Speed Limit Within Park – Concerns about how fast individuals drive throughout the campground are of high importance. More speed bumps will be ordered and placed within the park. Other talk regarding the speed limit:
  - Can the gators be governed within the park? It has been noted that Park Staff in gators are not following the posted speed limit.
  - Could we stop and remind all customers of the speed limit, instead of just allowing individuals with passes move through without stopping?
  - Is it possible for bigger directional signs to be placed in the park? This may help with people speeding through the campground trying to find the beach.

- Can citations for violators be given out by Park Staff? The Director noted that our rules state yes, however, the legality of that is being questioned. This will need further review.
- Can we implement a strike policy for violators and enforce it within the parks?
  - Place something in the waiver that is signed for check-in regarding this policy. However, this would not work the same for individuals just purchasing a vehicle permit or watercraft permit.
- Red Violation Tags – Concerns especially regarding boats this season were not acknowledged by Park Staff.
  - Is there a way of keeping rack of red tags that are given out to violators?
- It is believed that this meeting would be helpful earlier in the year so concerns can be worked on during the season.
- Boaters have no etiquette when it comes to parking and the use of the red t-posts.
- Is it possible to have a campground host that can help with concerns throughout the season? The Director did note this is something she has been looking into and is very eager to see if this is a possibility.
- Boat Trailer Parking –
  - Is it possible to add more T-Posts?
  - Enforcement of the boat parking area is not being monitored well.
  - Is it possible to keep track of how many watercrafts are coming in to the park and have a cap?
  - In the overflow parking lot down by the beach, when it is really full, it doesn't leave room for seasonal campers to move the boat trailer out of the ball field. Parks Supervisor Kurt Burnia did note that spaces can be marked as no parking to alleviate this.
  - Could the parking lot by the boat launched be striped more often?
  - It was noted by campground users in attendance that there was theft at the boat launch area this season.
- Gray Water –
  - The Director noted that 13 short term campers, along with multiple seasonals received the letter regarding possible violations.
  - A seasonal camper noted that they felt singled out and the everyone should be following these rules.
  - Is there a better way to enforce these rules?
  - Signs have been ordered regarding the gray water policy on the post sign.
- Is there a better system to utilize for complaints?
- Driving age of golf carts need to be addressed.
  - The Director noted that this will be addressed in the updates of the Parks Rules and Ordinances.
- Electric scooters have become more common within the park.
- Buoys – Can the buoys be moved next year so they are not right in from to the kayak launch?
- Is there a possibility to have golf cart or side by side parking near the boat tie off area?
- Trees need to be trimmed along the roadway to the boat launch.
- Is there a possibility of having a bathroom near the boat launch?

- The sewer project would open this as a possibility.
- Are there plans to do more electrical upgrades?
  - The Director noted that in the next 1-2 years the sewer project would be the main focus and then doing electrical upgrades. Director Hansen stated that the Parks Department will look for grant funding opportunities for electrical upgrades.
- The light at the boat launch needs to be fixed.
- Is it a possibility to get a sign that flashes the speed limit?
- Is the pricing and process for seasonal camping changing?
  - The Director noted that at this time, the pricing and process will not be changing.
- The Director noted that the Parks and Recreation Commission and Staff are trying to update Parks Rules and Ordinances and will be taking this discussion into consideration.
- Commissioner Engler noted that the hazardous waste collection will be held at the Isabella County Fairgrounds on Saturday, September 7, 2024.

## **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

The Director presented the invoices and credit card bills for July and August 2024. **It was moved (Clingan/Engler) to approve the credit card bills July and August 2024. Motion carried unanimously**

## **CAMPGROUND SUMMARY REPORT**

Director Hansen gave an update on the Campground Summary Report for August 2024.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **Employment/Volunteering**

Seasonal Field Staff are mostly done for the season. Coldwater Lake Family Park and Deerfield Nature Park currently have a Gate Attendant on the weekends. Herrick Recreation Area no longer has a Gate Attendant on staff.

### **Projects/Capital**

The Board of County Commissioners approved to levy the full .35 mills of the Isabella County Parks and Recreation Millage.

### **Parks**

The Director noted that a camper called her with concerns about gray water being dumped within the park. Upon looking into it further, the Director found that the State of Michigan does not differentiate between gray water and black water. If cited for infractions, the campground could lose licensing. After this, a letter was sent to any camper staying in the park that was either draining gray water or even missing a drain cap. Very specific language has been added to the campground waiver for all parks, markers for campground posts and on the online reservation system.

### **Accident/Incident**

The Director stated to the board that a laptop and weed whip were stolen from Coldwater Lake Family Park. Reports were made with the police department and an insurance claim will be made.

All County Park buildings will be updated to key code access instead of physical keys.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **Department of Natural Resources Spark Grant**

Parks Department attended a zoom meeting recently regarding the site drawings from Johnson Hill and Ethics Studio. The project will go out to bid this fall.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Rules and Ordinances Update Review**

The Director noted that there are two specific sections being presented this meeting for support to change. At the October Parks Board Meeting, the Director is hopeful to have a full document to review.

Below are the two changes that need approval to move forward to the Board of County Commissioners.

1. Camping Section 12 (addressing structures on campsite) – Currently reads: For more than two (2) motor vehicles, and one (1) major camping unit plus one (1) small tent (50 square feet or less) to occupy a single campsite. This section will now read: For more than two (2) motor vehicles, and one (1) primary camping unit plus one (1) additional soft-sided temporary structure to occupy a single campsite.
2. Camping Section 12 will have an additional section that will now read: To discharge wastes of any type, except into designated containers, or dumping stations. Per Central Michigan District Health Department Sanitary Code, grey water must be discharged into approved containers or sanitary dump stations. Violation will result in expulsion from the campground.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Commissioner Busch stated that he really appreciated how Alexis has handled her new role and this meeting. He did note that he believes it would be a good idea to have more meetings like this to have open communication. He also noted that the Road Commission has been working a lot with the new solar projects.

Commissioner Willoughby stated that they have been working on maintenance and the Drain Commission is wrapping up their work on the solar project.

Commissioner Engler noted that the second reading of the budget happened recently. Commissioner Engler congratulated the Park Staff on the passing of their millage renewal. He also noted that the jail project is currently about 87% complete.

**The next Parks and Recreation Board Meeting** is scheduled for Wednesday, October, 2 2024 at Deerfield Nature Park in the Pond Overlook Pavilion.

**ADJOURNMENT: It was moved to adjourn (Willoughby/Clingan) at 8:08pm. Motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Craig Clingan, Secretary