

**ISABELLA COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, May 6, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Vasold at 6:01 pm.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Ann Silker, Bill Hauck, Bob Busch, Bob Willoughby, Craig Clingan, Jeremy Murphy, Jordan Bruursema, Randy Vasold, Ruth Barrett, and Steven Weber.

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

N/A

OTHERS PRESENT

Director Alexis Hansen, Parks Supervisor Kurt Burnia, Assistant Parks Supervisor Emma Vanacker, Administrative Assistant Brady Falardeau, and seasonal park staff member Kathy Vanderkolk.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Agenda was accepted as presented (Hauck/Willoughby).

INTRODUCTIONS

N/A

MINUTES

The February 4, 2026 Board Meeting Minutes were reviewed. **It was moved (Murphy/Bruursema) to approve the February 4, 2026 Meeting Minutes. Motion carried unanimously.**

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

N/A

FINANCIAL REPORTS

The Director presented the bills for February 2026, March 2026 and April 2026. **It was moved (Murphy/Clingan) to approve the Financial Summary Report for February 2026, March 2026 and April 2026.**

CAMPGROUND SUMMARY REPORT

Director Hansen gave an update on the Campground Summary Report for February 2026, March 2026 and April 2026.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Professional Development

Year-round Park Ranger Andrew Black studied for and completed his Certified Playground Safety Inspector certification exam, results are pending.

Employee/Volunteers

Hiring is still ongoing with a focus on finding a Night Ranger for Herrick Recreation Area, several Park Ranger Positions and one Gate Attendant Substitute.

Parks

The Herrick Recreation Area Cabin renovations are nearly complete with only some finishing touches to the paint and stain to be done.

The Installation of hammock posts on the Herrick Recreation Area campsites has been completed.

The Coldwater Lake Family Park mural project for the Hofbauer Pavilion is slated to be done this summer, with a call to artists being prepared to go out soon.

Projects/Capital

Fiscal Year 2027 budget prep is underway.

The permit to remove the fishing platform at Deerfield Nature Park has been issued and the removal is tentatively scheduled for August 2026.

The GameTime/mParks Playcore Statewide Funding Initiative was received for a Nature Grounds™ playground. Parks Supervisor Emma Vanacker has put together a design and we are awaiting final details of the grant requirements.

Programs/Events

The Ribbon Cutting for the Herrick Recreation Area Bathhouse is scheduled for May 27.

A Celebration of the Pere Marquette Rail Trail's 25th Anniversary is scheduled for June 11.

Jay's & Webber Wildlife and Education Center is having a fundraising event on June 12.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources' free fishing weekend is happening June 13-14. The Isabella County Parks and Recreation Commission approved allowing free entry into Isabella County Parks in observation of that event.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Department of Natural Resources Spark Grant

The Herrick Recreation Area Bathhouse on the campground side is nearly complete, with having passed the building inspection on May 6. Just waiting for the contractor to finish installing the mirrors and seeing if potential plumbing issues subside.

NEW BUSINESS

Director Hansen expressed her concern about the rising expenses in relation to the operation of the parks; specifically noting the rising utility costs and increase of minimum wage to \$15 per hour. In addition, Administrative Assistant Brady Falardeau put together research showing Isabella County Parks is charging a rate much lower than the average in the State of Michigan. Director Hansen proposed an increase of the camping fees to offset these costs in the budget for Fiscal Year 2027.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Willoughby shared that the Drain Commission is busy with repairs due to the recent storms.

Commissioner Weber added that the Isabella County Board of Commissioners accepted the grant for the Mural at Coldwater Lake Family Park and also approved the hiring of two new Road Patrol Officers for the Isabella County Sheriff's Department.

Commissioner Hauck shared an update on several Road Commission projects noting that the upcoming repayment of Vernon Road was being done in-house saving the Road Commission money.

Commissioner Silker shared that the main topic of the previous Planning Commission Meeting was the windmill laydown yard proposed to go in on Weidman Road.

The next Parks and Recreation Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 3, 2026 at the Pond Overlook Pavilion at Deerfield Nature Park.

ADJOURNMENT: It was moved to adjourn (Willoughby/Clingan) at 6:54 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Craig Clingan, Secretary