

Winona County Parks & Environment Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday May 3, 2022 - 4:30 p.m.

Committee Members Present: John Howard George Howe
 Dale Hadler Matt Neil
 Amanda Gentry Steve Jacob
 Don Evanson Kristin Dieterman
 Sadie Neuman

Staff Present: Kay Qualley Aaron Lafee
 Lew Overhaug

1.0 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:39 p.m. by Chair Amanda Gentry.

2.0 Introductions and welcome new members

No introductions necessary.

3.0 Approval of Agenda

On motion by Dale Hadler and seconded by George Howe, the Parks & Environment Advisory Committee voted to approve the agenda. Vote: Yes – All (7).

4.0 Approval of Minutes of January 4, 2022 Meeting

On motion by Steve Jacob and seconded by Dale Hadler, the Parks & Environment Advisory Committee voted to approve the minutes. Vote: Yes – All (7).

5.0 Approval of Minutes of February 9, 2022 Meeting

On motion by Steve Jacob and seconded by George Howe, the Parks & Environment Advisory Committee voted to approve the amended minutes, to include George Howe as in attendance. Vote: Yes – All (7).

6.0 Stone Point Park Maintenance and Garden Updates

Ross Dunsmoor shared that repairs to the water system were completed last week at the Community Gardens. Also, the County was able to secure a neighboring farmer to assist in plowing the garden fields. There was quite a bit of damage to the roads at Stone Point, so the highway department is working on repair work.

Kay Qualley shared that the application made to the MN-DNR, as recommended by the Parks Committee, for the wildlife plantings, removal of invasives and work at Stone Point Park was

awarded to Winona County in the amount of \$176,000, exactly as presented to the Board in the request to apply for the grant. The next step is for the Parks and Environment Committee to discuss and make a recommendation to the County Board towards acceptance of the grant. The Parks Committee discussed items inclusive to the grant and asked for the budget table summary to be sent out to the committee members. Staff will send out the original budget information. More will be forthcoming from the DNR and staff will prepare a request for Board action toward obtaining approval for the grant.

Kay Qualley added that the DNR grant does not cover trail work, only prairie restoration, and that in terms of sequencing, it would be best to install trail loops first, if that portion of the next phase is approved by the Board from our pending application for use of American Rescue Act funds. That action to request administration and Board approval for ARPA funding for the trail loops was previously recommended by the Parks & Environment Committee for the Department to submit.

On motion by Dale Hadler and seconded by Matt Neil, the Parks and Environment Advisory Committee voted to submit the grant to the Winona County Board for their consideration with the recommendation by the Parks Committee to accept the MN-DNR grant in the amount of \$176,000. Vote: Yes – All (7).

Kristine Dieterman and Sadie Neuman joined the meeting.

7.0 Farmers Park Updates

Per Aaron Lafee, May 1st the Park officially opened up and there have been a couple lodge rentals. Some grass seeding is needed after the tree removal in February. Collection of quotes for the red pavilion shingles and bandshell electrical repair work are underway from the damage in the December 2021 storm. He's trying to coordinate with *Sentenced To Serve* to remove sticks from the storms so lawnmowing can commence. Some posts were damaged over the course of the winter from a car, so repair work will need to be completed.

Kay Qualley shared that the 2022 goal for Farmers Park, based on Parks Committee recommendations and approved budget, is some signage near the power washed stonework at the entrance, an ADA-accessible tire swing and some new play equipment.

8.0 Apple Blossom Park Updates

Kay Qualley provided information that a group of volunteers, sort of a "friends of the park" group met informally with the Lions Club of La Crescent, regarding the potential of placing a pavilion at Apple Blossom. Although the price tag for something of that size was not acted upon by the group, they did express interest in decking or timber to create an overlook area (per plan). George Howe said there used to be a more active and formal friends and neighbor group that would assist in maintaining the park, such as picking up trash and aiding with invasives removal. He hopes to get the friends group up and going again and to associate it under the Parks Committee so as to coordinate approved work and reduce the amount of work to be paid for in the budget and to get more work done on behalf of the Parks Committee.

George Howe shared that volunteers will conduct a controlled burn of the prairie at Apple Blossom Saturday May 7th at 3pm, dependent on the weather. The usual DNR permit will be obtained by the County and the La Crescent Fire Department is providing backup, if anyone was interested in assisting. Several prairie enthusiasts have volunteered in the past, including Parks & Environment Committee members George Howe and John Howard. The original prairie planting was funded by the WC-SWCD. The burns are done to knock back early spring non-native weeds and it helps to reduce competition for the desirable prairie plants.

8.1 Apple Blossom Working Group Volunteer Input and Overlook deck

The Parks Committee discussed the possible Apple Blossom overlook improvements, the Old Oak Knoll Overlook, the Lock & Dam Overlook and the Mississippi Overlook. Sample photos of ideas and the maps for two potential locations were created and presented by Lew Overhaug, County staff, which assisted the discussion. There was talk about trail improvements done by volunteers that currently lead to these overlooks and potential removal of a few trees to open the views, especially if the trees were invasives. Some staff work would need to be done for the Mississippi Overlook, before further improvements are made, as the last part of the trail and the overlook is located on a parcel owned by MNDOT. Staff can reach out to MNDOT to discuss the outlook. Further discussion ensued about the structural work for the overlooks.

On motion by George Howe and seconded by Don Evanson, the Parks Committee voted on the recommendation to have County Staff obtain a material list and cost estimate for the “Lock & Dam Overlook” (quarry outlook) and then reach out to the Lions Club in regard to the project. Vote: Yes – All.

On motion by Don Evanson and seconded by Dale Hadler, the Parks Committee voted to have staff look into obtaining the property on which the Mississippi Overlook lies upon with the goal of completion within 1 year’s time and seek solution to obtaining temporary legal access in the meantime.

Kristin Deiterman offered an amendment to the motion to include verbiage indicating preference of a deed but otherwise other access and right to utilize the outlook; seconded by Don Evanson. Vote on amendment: Yes – All.

Vote on the amended motion: Yes – All.

Aaron Lafee said a lot of garbage is still being dumped at Apple Blossom, the public are still having unauthorized bonfires at the park and the no burning sign has been removed by someone. The Sheriff’s Office will be making extra patrols through the area and had already started that day. Staff will replace the fires prohibited sign, previously approved by the Parks Committee.

On motion by Steve Jacob and seconded by Kristin Dieterman, the Parks Committee voted to post signs to indicate no dumping and camera surveillance. Vote: Yes – All.

9.0 Solid Waste Plan Draft

Ross Dunsmoor gave overview explanation of the draft solid waste plan with the summary and attachments. There are about a dozen waste haulers operating in Winona County and three transfer stations. The County is proposing a continuation of the current plan. The County's involvement in waste management is primarily to remove items from the waste stream that could be handled in a better fashion, as opposed to putting in landfill or incinerator. The plan needs to detail every aspect of the system, whether it exists in Winona County, such as a landfill or incinerator. The County is required to receive citizen input, so the County is asking the citizen advisory committee to review the plan to make recommendations. The plan would ultimately be submitted to the MPCA. Preliminary submission to the MPCA has deemed the plan complete. Steve Jacob stated his constituents are happy with the services with Winona County. Discussion ensued about capacities for waste disposal. Comments regarding the solid waste plan can be submitted directly to Ross Dunsmoor over the next two-three weeks, so it is part of the formal record. The MPCA will also have a formal comment period.

10.0 Member Updates

George Howe – Saturday May 7th controlled burn at Apple Blossom at 3pm, contact George Howe for details, if interested.

John Howard – The Trout Unlimited Habitat Improvement Demonstration and wildflower tour from last Saturday is rescheduled to this Saturday May 7th at 1PM, call the History Center to register.

Amanda Gentry – The SWCD is interviewing for a new staff person, more to come after interviews.

11.0 Next meeting date: July 5 at 4:30PM at Stone Point; change to Wednesday July 6?

On motion by Dale Hadler and seconded by Don Evanson, the Parks and Environment Advisory Committee voted to change the July 2022 meeting to Wednesday July 6 at 4:30pm at Stone Point Park. Vote: Yes – All.

12.0 Adjourn

On motion by Steve Jacob and seconded by Kristin Dieterman, the Parks Committee adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anne Schwertel, Administrative Specialist

Signed by: 
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Committee Chair/Vice Chair

July 7, 2022 | 7:02 AM PDT
Date