

## Jennings County Parks and Recreation Board Meeting

Meeting minutes: September 26, 2023

### **Park Board Meeting: 5:30-7:35**

Present:

Board Members: Avis McGovern, Samantha Wilder, Kristin Wiley, Wayne Zamora

Absent: Jennifer Sanders

Staff: Greg Martin

Guests: Teri Doran, Kelly Spencer, Kelly Harrison, Francis Walker, Mike Walker, Amy Boswell, Ronnie Boswell, Brad Bender, Daniel Young, Gorge

#### 1. Guests or Guest Reports:

Questions/Statements were received from Francis Walker

- She was upset about the removal of the Extreme Sports/Climbing sign in the park. It was explained that County Commissioners asked that climbing signs be removed.
- She asked if the board had read the mission statement and then read it back to the board
- She asked why the park wouldn't be trying to buy the Strawberry Fields area next to the park. Wayne explained that land acquisition was being completed through the Next Level Trails Grant Committee - this was their area of responsibility. He explained what was going on in this area with time and money constraints for this project.

Terry Doran questioned the board about why they were not working toward getting climbing reinstated. She asked if the board had read the grant and when.

Mike Walker again asked why the park wouldn't want to buy land adjoining the park with or without climbing. Once again, the Trails grant was explained and it was reiterated that the Town of Vernon was the owner/in charge of this project.

Francis Walker was asked if she had any other concerns at the park. She was just concerned that something besides climbing would be cut. She has noticed there aren't as many people in the park since climbing has stopped and she misses the climbers being there.

Ronnie Boswell commented how nice the park is and how much better it looks than in the past when he was growing up.

Kelly Pruitt commented that the park is a little scarier than it had been when climbers were around.

Wayne explained that a park has different meanings for different people and is always changing.

Greg stated that the county broke a 4 year lease with him.

Gorge (previous manager of Columbus Climbing Gym) stated that he sees more litter since climbing has stopped. Talked about how he brought many people to the community to climb and would like the park board to voice his concerns to the commissioners.

Wayne asked all in attendance if they had been to a Town of Vernon, Next Level Trails Grant Committee or County Commissioners meeting, since many of the concerns regarding land acquisition and climbing were actually their responsibilities. He reminded all in attendance that they too could attend these meetings and stated that the next Trails meeting was 9/28/23 at 1:00 at the Purdue Extension Office.

Brad Bender gave the board info about the Next Level Trails progress and answered visitor questions, mostly regarding land acquisition.

2. Approve Minutes - Minutes from the August meeting were approved. Avis motioned to approve, Sam seconded, motion carries.
3. Old Business - see directors report
4. New Business - none
5. Director's Report

See attached

-Eco Lake in the last phases. Wayne asked about having a soft opening as previously discussed, with Greg stating he didn't think it would happen

-Reported that the budget was sent to the county in July. Wayne asked about capital projects. Greg reported that they would include hazard tree removal, engineered wood chips for both parks, basketball goals for Eco Lake and Engineering for upgrades at Muscatatuck.

-Mike Braun toured the visitors center and Vinegar Mill this past week.

-ICC is coming to fix a bridge on the yellow trail at an event this weekend. Avis asked that Greg let the council know about events such as this in order to be more involved. She asked if free camping was on the table for other volunteers. Greg reported that camping would not be in the campground, so there would be no cost involved.

-Splash pad - at the end of the season, the UV disinfecting unit was not working correctly. Spear Corp. technicians were trying to figure out why. Greg was going to email to inquire the next day. Wayne asked if Greg was planning to try and get things working prior to winter pay, so it would be ready in the spring. Greg was not sure.

-Eco Lake signs were repaired and repainted. Three gates are needed at Eco to replace the construction gates.

-Winter projects - pay station, fire rings and display cases at Eco Lake to be addressed Dec.-Feb.

-Non reverting funds are great and are almost up to the level of last year without having Tame the Terrain income.

-Variable camping rates never happened this year. Active.com technicians could never make it work correctly. Greg reported that they would address this more over the winter to see if they could get it working.

-Greg reported needing to get a graphic map up for Eco Lake over the winter for the online reservation system.

-Wayne again brought up the possibility of site visits at Eco and Muscatatuck with no response from Greg. He reported that he will talk to Greg about possible dates before winter.

-Eclipse Event - the park will be available to other entities who want to host events. The Dining Hall is already booked. Camping will be open by this time.

-Winterize Campground - Nov 1st

6. Approve claims - none
7. Next Meeting - October 24, 2023
8. Adjournment - Meeting adjourned at 7:35.