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EATON COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

January 6, 2021

The Eaton County Parks and Recreation Commission met virtually.

PRESENT: Eric Deibel, Brian Droscha, Jack Duffy, Sarah Ferguson, Alisa Gonzales-Pennington, Jon Horford, Barbara Rogers, Kathy Webber, and Jane Whitacre

ABSENT: Duane Eldred

GUESTS: Riley Spayde – FOECP, Gerry Goffin – FOECP, and Bob McConnell

STAFF: Troy Stowell-Director, Jackie Blanc-Operations Manager/Naturalist, Crystal Smith – Recreation & Event Coordinator, Melody Smalley – Administrative Assistant

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Webber called the Parks Commission meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and roll call.

2. INTRODUCTIONS/CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

None

3. ELECTION OF 2021 PARKS COMMISSION OFFICERS

Commissioner Droscha opened the floor for nominations for 2021 officers.

Commissioner Droscha opened the floor for nominations for the office of Chairman. Motion mad by Commissioner Whitacre, second by Commissioner Webber to nominate Commissioner Ferguson as Chairman. There being no other nominations Commissioner Droscha closed the nominations. Roll call vote 9-0 in favor of Commissioner Ferguson to be elected as Chairman. **Motion carried.**

Commissioner Droscha opened the floor for nominations for the office of Vice Chairman. Motion made by Chairman Ferguson, second by Commissioner Duffy to retain Kathy Webber as Vice Chairman. There being no other nominations Commissioner Droscha closed the nominations. Roll call vote 9-0 in favor of Commissioner Webber to be retained as Vice Chairman. **Motion carried.**

Commissioner Droscha opened the floor for nominations for the office of Secretary. Motion mad by Commissioner Rogers, second by Commissioner Whitacre to nominate Commissioner Duffy as Secretary. There being no other nominations Commissioner Droscha closed the nominations. Roll call vote 9-0 in favor of Commissioner Duffy to be elected as Secretary. **Motion carried.**

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion made by Droscha, second by Deibel to approve the consent agenda that included January Agenda and November minutes. **Motion carried.**

5. STAFF REPORTS

- Jackie Blanc gave a brief overview of her report that was distributed by email.
- Crystal Smith gave a brief overview of her report that included December's Ornament Hunt and projected programs for the future that included 9 weeks of summer camp at Lincoln Brick Park, The Ledges Auto Show at Fitzgerald Park, and Waterfest at Crandell Park.
- Director Stowell gave a brief overview of his report that was distributed by email.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

7. FINANCIAL REPORTS

A. Master Voucher

November and December Master Vouchers were received. Motion made by Droscha, second by Deibel to receive the Master Vouchers. **Motion carried.**

B. Financial Report

November and December Financial Reports were received. Motion made by Droscha, second by Rogers to receive the Financial Reports. **Motion carried.**

8. PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

- ##### A. Friends of Eaton County Parks
- Riley Spayde said the Friends are still accepting 2021 budget suggestions, welcomed the new commissioners, and stated the former Chairman McConnell will be missed.

9. OLD BUSINESS

None

10. NEW BUSINESS

A. Resolution of Appreciation for Dr. L. Robert McConnell

Director Stowell presented and read Resolution #2021-01 and inquired if a Lifetime Annual Pass was something the board would like to give to former Chairman McConnell

RESOLUTION IN APPRECIATION OF DR. L ROBERT McConnell

January 6, 2021

Resolution #01-2021

WHEREAS, Dr. L. Robert McConnell of 4707 Thornapple Lane Lansing, MI 48917, has served with distinction as an Eaton County Parks Commissioner from 2008-2020, and served multiple terms as Chairman of the Parks Commission beginning in 2012 and;

WHEREAS, Dr. McConnell is an advocate for Eaton County Parks and its effort to advance the quality of life for area residents through parks and programs that provide a memorable outdoor experience for all and;

WHEREAS, as a Parks Commissioner, Dr. McConnell worked diligently and tirelessly in support of the acquisition and conceptualization of Crandell Park; and

WHEREAS, further in this role he advocated for the pursuit of a smoke-free park environment, resulting in the establishment of a model that has been emulated in other areas, led the establishment of new park policies and procedures including leading the Parks Commission to establish revised roles and responsibilities, and continues to advocate for long term financial sustainability for the parks system; and

WHEREAS, Dr. McConnell will always be known as a true voice for accessibility, a loyal volunteer and contributor for parks throughout Eaton County, and his passion and generosity will continue to be a beacon for those to follow for years to come

Now, therefore be it resolved, that the Eaton County Parks Commission would like to recognize Dr. L. Robert McConnell with this tribute for his years of service and dedication to the parks system and will always be grateful for his gifts of time, commitment and willingness to advocate at all levels for the advancement of Eaton County Parks.

Motion made by Droscha, Second by Whitacre to adopt the resolution as written and to present the lifetime pass to former Chairman McConnell. **Motion carried.**

B. Resolution of Support for Recreation for Rural Communities USDA Technical Assistance Grant

Director Stowell presented and read Resolution #2021-02.

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE APPLICATION FOR
REGIONAL TRAIL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

January 6, 2021
Resolution #02-2021

WHEREAS, Eaton County residents have demonstrated through public input opportunities that regional non-motorized trails are a priority for future development including 76% of respondents in the 2021-2025 Master Plan Public Survey in favor of a regional trail connecting the communities of Charlotte and Eaton Rapids.

WHEREAS, The 2021-2025 Eaton County Parks Master Plan establishes Goal 5: Connectivity to establish a trail system that connects recreational facilities and amenities throughout the County by land and water. To develop a regional trail plan with surrounding municipalities that would link community facilities, schools and parks.

WHEREAS, A group representing Eaton County, the cities of Charlotte and Eaton Rapids and the Townships of Eaton and Eaton Rapids has convened to explore the feasibility of a non-motorized trail connecting the Downtown Districts of Charlotte and Eaton Rapids.

WHEREAS, The Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Grant through the USDA helps communities develop strategies and an action plan to revitalize their Main Street(s) through outdoor recreation opportunities and connectivity.

WHEREAS, The scope of the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities grant application will be for technical assistance in developing a Regional Trail Study identifying potential trail route(s) design, implementation and funding mechanisms.

Now, therefore be it resolved, that the Eaton County Parks Commission is in support of the application for the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Technical Assistance Grant.

Motion made by Whitacre, Second by Droscha to adopt the resolution as written. **Motion carried.**

C. Fitzgerald Park Annual Fee Discussion

Director Stowell stated the City of Grand Ledge has developed their pass for Fitzgerald Park per the most recent lease agreement. The pass will be sold for \$10 and only available to those that live in the city of Grand Ledge, passes will be available only at the City of Grand Ledge City Hall, and only valid for Fitzgerald Park.

D. Fitzgerald LWCF Encumbrance Discussion

Director Stowell informed the commissioners of alternatives that are being looked at for the 1980 Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Encumbrance that was obtained for the nature center area that will be effected; if the City of Grand Ledge goes forward with their plans to expand the waste water treatment plant.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

None

12. LIMITED PUBLIC COMMENT

Riley Spayde, The Friends of Eaton County Parks Chairman, read and presented their recognition letter to former Chairman McConnell.

*Friends of Eaton County Parks
Box 522
Grand Ledge, Michigan 48837*

23 December 2020

Dear Dr. L Robert McConnell:

As your tenure on the Eaton County Parks and Recreation Commission draws to an end, we wish to recognize, thank, and honor you for your service to the commission and to our Eaton County park system.

First, we thank you for being a good friend to our volunteer organization. You have supported us with our annual membership dues and consistently participated actively in our fundraising activities including generously sponsoring "the table of eight" at our Dinner Cruises. You have also encouraged our participation at the Park Commission meetings and shown respect by inviting us to be a part of the organizational life of the park commission.

Second, we wish to express our appreciation for your leadership on the park commission. By year's end, it will be twelve years since your initial appointment. Your fellow commissioners expressed their own confidence in you by electing you their chair for the past nine years. You served well, guiding the park commission through the lengthy and arduous process of successfully finalizing the DNR grant to create the 432 acre Crandell Park. Your continual advocacy for a countywide park millage to address serious funding shortages has often been "a voice crying in the wilderness." We have added our voice to yours and hopefully someday soon this will be achieved. You have done your best to strengthen the commission and have always chaired with a manner expressive of your personality: i.e. civil, thoughtful, poised, forward looking, and always with a sense of humor and a hearty laugh. And finally you have been true to your professional experience and commitments by effectively advocating for those who are experiencing disability.

Finally, it is also appropriate to place your service to the park commission in its greater context. It is in actuality the tip of the proverbial iceberg. For that reason we are including your resume as an attachment. It, in summary, reveals 32 years of excellent public service within Michigan government, educational attainments ending with a doctorate in Public Administration, and post retirement employment which includes teaching and consulting with MSU, Wayne State, and Western Michigan, and certainly pertinent to this conversation, since retirement you

have participated as a volunteer with over 15 different community and professional organizations. Added to the list are extensive honors from a wide variety of organizations who have appreciated and valued your service and leadership

So once again, thank you. We wish you all the best as you continue your journey and continue to serve the community.

With Respect, Appreciation, and Admiration,

Riley Spayde, President

*On Behalf of the Friends of Eaton County Parks Board of Directors**

**Pete Bennick, Sarah Ferguson, Karl Glarner Jr., Gerry Goffin, Meggin Heeney, Riley Spayde, Kathy Webber*

Motion made by Webber, second by Droscha to include the letter of recognition in Park Board's minutes. **Motion carried.**

Bob McConnell thanked the commission for the resolution, thanked the Friends of Eaton County for their letter of support, and congratulated the new officers and new appointees. McConnell also acknowledged Stowell for his contributions to the parks.

13. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Droscha said that for the second year in a row there were kayakers out on the lake at Crandell Park on Christmas Day.

14. ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting is scheduled for February 3, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. at either Lincoln Brick Park, Grand Ledge OR virtual based on Executive Order. There being no further business, a motion for adjournment was made. The regular meeting was adjourned by Chairman Ferguson at 7:28 p.m.

For the Commission,



Troy Stowell- Director of Eaton County Parks

MLS