

FOREST, PARKS, AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Douglas County Board of Supervisors
Monday, December 20, 2021, 9:30 a.m., Forestry Headquarters
9182 East Hughes Avenue, Solon Springs, Wisconsin

Meeting called to order by Chair Liebaert.

ROLL CALL: Present – Mark Liebaert, Mary Lou Bergman, Joseph Moen, Nick Baker, Steve Long. Others present – Alex Rowe, Brian Rusk, Jim Latvala, Brett Corlett, Brian Conley, Derek Essen, Ed Slaminski, Al Schoenborn, Loren Jones, Justin Holmes, Clint Meyer, Jon Harris, Shelley Nelson (remote), Cheryl Westman, Committee Clerk.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion by Bergman, second Baker, to approve the minutes from the October 4, 2021, regular, and October 27, 2021, timber sale meetings. Motion carried.

Department Reports:

Budget: Harris reviewed the budget for the time period ending November 30, 2021.

Forest Management Operations: Harris reported 14 active sales; three are high priority sales.

Parks and Recreation: Meyer reported Mooney Dam campground pavilion and play area project finished; pulled docks out; working on ATV 2022-2023 grant cycle; researching lining railroad grade culverts versus replacement; working with clubs on trail reroutes; and installation of groomer tracking geo system.

ACTION ITEMS/REFERRALS:

Winter Trail Reroute Request (Drift Dodgers Snowmobile Club): Club requesting approval to move a small section (0.75 miles) of existing trail 4 off School Forest Road into adjacent County Forest Land in the Town of Summit (map in packet). Trail will be for snowmobile and winter ATV use only.

ACTION: Motion by Moen, second Baker, to approve the winter trail reroute request as proposed. Motion carried.

Winter Trail Reroute Request (4 Seasons Recreation Club): Club requesting approval to move a small portion (200 feet) of Trail 3N reroute off Cranberry Lake Road onto adjacent County Forest Land in the Town of Wascott (map in packet). Trail will be for snowmobile and winter ATV use only.

ACTION: Motion by Bergman, second Moen, to approve the winter trail reroute request as proposed. Motion carried.

Installation of Warming Shack and Emergency Helipad on County Forest Land Request (Get-er-Done Club): Club requesting permission to construct a warming shed and emergency helicopter landing pad on County Forest Land off Trail 17 in the Town of Wascott (map in packet), and assist the department in applying for grant funding from the WDNR snowmobile and ATV program. Location is currently completely undeveloped. Club to be responsible for all construction and maintenance costs, access, necessary permitting, and insurance requirements.

ACTION: Motion by Bergman, second Baker, to approve request from Get-er-Done Club to construct a warming shack and emergency helicopter landing pad on County Forest Land off Trail 17, and enter into a MOU with the club up for review every five years. Motion carried.

SUSPEND THE RULES: Motion by Liebaert, second Baker to take up item 4l. Motion carried. Handout distributed.

Active Timber Sale Contract Oak Wilt Policy: Department staff have identified 3 previously sold timber sale contracts that did not contain the standard seasonal harvesting restriction of April 15th to July 15th to reduce the introduction and spread of oak wilt to the immediate area due to the fact that the sales were sold before oak wilt had been identified in the surrounding area. Paid contract prices were of greater value since all-season harvesting opportunity was offered. Department staff requesting to modify contract terms of all 3 contracts to include the April 15th to July 15th harvesting restriction to protect the oak resource by reducing the introduction and spread of oak wilt to these areas of the forest. Two options proposed for current contract holders: Option 1-return contract without penalty; or Option 2-apply a standard 15% stumpage price reduction for all remaining contract volume. Modification would also be available to apply to any other previously sold, high risk, oak wilt contracts identified in the future although not many are expected.

ACTION: Motion by Baker, second Long, to approve oak wilt contract modification policy as presented and approve offering contract holders Options 1 and 2 for the 3 identified contracts and any other previously sold, high risk, oak wilt contracts identified in the future. Motion carried.

Campground Opening Date, Closing Date, and Off-Season Camping Policy: Current policy reviewed – permanent 2022 policy changes proposed: Standard Season camping dates providing full service and amenities from two Fridays before Memorial Day to Monday after Labor Day to remain unchanged. Extended Season camping dates with the earliest opening date of May 1st and latest closing date of October 31st providing full service and amenities to be offered at the complete discretion of department staff dependent on weather and staffing. Off-Season camping dates with no service or amenities (electric service provided) to continue to be offered only at the Gordon Dam Campground starting the day following the Standard Season and/or Extended Season closing date until the campground is inaccessible by highway vehicles due to snow conditions on the access road.

ACTION: Motion by Baker, second Bergman, to approve a permanent camping policy with Standard Season camping dates to remain unchanged, allow for Extended Season camping dates opening as early as May 1st and closing as late as October 31st at the discretion of department staff dependent on weather and staffing, and Off-Season camping dates at only Gordon Dam Campground following the Standard Season and/or Extended Season closing date until the campground is inaccessible by road due to snow. Motion carried.

Campground Campsite Advance Reservation Policy: Department planning on implementing an advanced reservation system for all 3 campgrounds prior to the 2022 opening date. Campsites may be reserved during Standard Season dates only, and may be made online up to 6 months in advance and up to 14 days prior to the date of occupancy (complete reservation policy in packet). Campsite check-in at 2:00 PM and check-out at noon (12:00 PM). Campsites will still be available on a first come first serve basis as long as they are not already reserved. No minimum number of days reservation requirement. Cancellations and refunds to be handled as detailed in the policy. Policy can be modified if necessary in the future. Advanced reservations will not be offered during Extended Season dates or Off-Season dates in any campground, campsites will only be available on a first come first serve basis.

ACTION: Motion by Bergman, second Long, to approve campground campsite advance reservation policy as proposed. Motion carried.

Department Fee Schedule: Request to increase daily fee from \$75/day to \$100/day for Bird Sanctuary/Clubhouse rental; also increase Off-Season camping rate at Gordon Dam campground from \$12/night to \$20/night for an electric site and \$15/night for a non-electric site. Maintain \$25/night for an electric site and \$20/night for a non-electric site for all 3 campgrounds during Standard Season and Extended Season dates.

ACTION (REFERRAL/RESOLUTION): Motion by Baker, second Moen, to approve department fee schedule as presented, and forward to Administration Committee and County Board. Motion carried unanimously.

2022 Department Annual Work Plan: Reviewed – required annually by the state. Discussion on including Mooney Dam Campground expansion project in the plan.

ACTION (RESOLUTION): Motion by Baker, second Moen, to add Mooney Dam Campground expansion project and approve 2022 Department Annual Work Plan, and forward to County Board. Motion carried unanimously.

2022 Annual WDNR Recreational Trail Grant Program Participation: Annual approval required by state for WDNR Recreational Trail Grant participation.

ACTION (RESOLUTION): Motion by Baker, second Long, to approve participation in 2022 Annual WDNR Recreational Trail Grant Program, and forward to County Board. Motion carried unanimously.

Town of Summit Property Acquisition:

Property Acquisition: Landowner interested in selling a 40 acre parcel located in the Town of Summit to Douglas County. Parcel is surrounded by Douglas County Forest Lands and has access to forest management value. Requesting \$32,000 to purchase parcel, with up to an additional \$3,000 for closing costs and other related acquisition expenses, for a total not to exceed \$35,000.

ACTION (RESOLUTION): Motion by Bergman, second Moen, to approve purchase of 40 acre parcel in the Town of Summit, release of capital reserve funding (Land Acquisition) not to exceed \$35,000 and application for regular use County Forest Law Entry, and refer to Administration Committee and County Board. Motion carried unanimously.

November 2021, Land and Development Forest Management Services Request: On behalf of the Highway Department, Land and Development Committee requesting forest management services (timber sale establishment) to be performed on county-owned land where the Highway Department's main Hawthorne shop facility is located (map in packet). Any provided services to follow standard terms and conditions of the existing MOA for Forest Management Services.

ACTION: Motion by Baker, second Long, to approve forest management service request (timber sale establishment) for the identified property as requested by the Land and Development Committee on behalf of the Highway Department. Motion carried.

Village of Solon Springs Railroad Road Crossing Closure: Village of Solon Springs working with the railroad to establish a quiet zone for trains within the village. Process would require closure of 1 of the 3 existing road/track crossings (map in packet). Village evaluating what crossing to close and considering closing the Marion Avenue crossing which would have a direct impact on access to Lucius Woods County Park. Village seeking preliminary input from the county. There will be Village Board meeting allowing for public feedback on the crossing proposal in February.

ACTION: Motion by Liebaert, second Baker, to direct Harris to author a letter to the Village of Solon Springs Board requesting compensation from the railroad to cover the increased cost for county staff accessing the park in the event of the Marion Avenue crossing is selected for closure and requesting that the board consider the traffic implications of relocating large recreational vehicles onto alternate routes. Motion carried.

Request to Amend Forestry Department Blanket Exemption Under #1.17, Pesticide Ordinance to Include Forest Health Issues: Request discussed in detail at October 27, 2021, meeting. Amendment application in meeting packet. Request to amend existing Pesticide Ordinance #1.17 blanket exemption approved at January 4, 2021, meeting, to include chemical treatments for oak wilt, heterobasidion root disease, and other forest health diseases on all lands owned and/or managed by the Forestry Department. Blanket exemption approvals by standing committee of jurisdiction acceptable under the ordinance. Committee interested in monthly reporting of all treatments.

ACTION: Motion by Baker, second Bergman, to approve amending the January 4, 2021, Blanket Pesticide Ordinance #1.17 Exemption approval to include for purposes of forest health issues, with monthly reporting to committee for all invasive and/or forest health treatments. Motion carried.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS/CORRESPONDENCE/UPDATES/REPORTS:

2021 Douglas County Park Campgrounds Revenues: Reviewed; 2021 produced the highest camping fee revenues in department history to date. Third consecutive year the previous record high revenue figure was surpassed. All signs are indicating high use again in 2022.

Comprehensive Land-Use Plan 2021-2035: The WDNR officially approved the Final Draft version of the Comprehensive Land-Use Plan 2021-2035 marking the conclusion of the 2 year project.

Extended Timber Sale Contracts: 28 high priority contracts going into this winter harvesting season; 15 – 5th year or longer contracts; 1 – 7th year contract; 4 of the 28 contracts were forfeited back to the county. The longer a contract is held on the books, the greater the liability risk to the county. Monthly updates to committee throughout the winter harvesting season.

Forest Carbon Program: Multiple feasibility analyses have been received from potential project developers with non-disclosure agreements in place. All developers have determined the county forest to be a very strong candidate for a voluntary market carbon project. Next step would be to select a developer and move forward with developing a project. Harris to consult with Administrator and/or Corporation Counsel on how to handle moving forward, outside consultant may be utilized to assist with process.

Mooney Dam Campground Expansion Project: Map in packet – potential expansion area identified. ATV/UTV accessible campground area to be considered. Grant monies available to assist with project.

Department Staffing: Inventory Forester/GIS Specialist voluntarily left for position outside of the county. LTE Forester positions to be advertised soon for next year.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Baker, second Moen, to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.

Submitted by,

Cheryl Westman, Committee Clerk