



Van Buren County Parks Commission

Donald Handon Board of Commission Chambers
219 E Paw Paw Street, Suite 204
Paw Paw, MI 49079

Meeting Minutes – July 9, 2024, 11:00 AM Regular Meeting Agenda



A. Call to Order & Attendance – Chairperson Mike Chappell called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM.

Present: Chairman Mike Chappell, Richard Godfrey, Joe Parman, Becky Grabemeyer, Kurt Doroh, Wayne Nelson, Emily Hickmott and Daywi Cook. Also in attendance included: Lisa (Imus) Ransler. **Absent:** Vice Chair John Small and Paul Garrod.

B. Approval of July 9, 2024 Agenda - Motion to approve by Doroh, supported by Hickmont; Motion: Carried.

C. Approval of June 11, 2024 Minutes - Motion to approve the June 11, 2024, minutes by Doroh, supported by Godfrey; Motion: Carried.

D. Public Comments - None.

E. New Business

1. Land Donation - The commission formally recognized and expressed gratitude for the generous donation of Lots 36 & 37 in Syndicate Park by Chuck and Belinda Sherman. This donation will enhance the county's park offerings, and the commission discussed the potential uses for these lots.

2. Blue Star Trail Grant Application - The commission discussed the ongoing efforts to secure funding for the Blue Star Trail project, which aims to extend a non-motorized trail from Berrien County to South Haven. A \$60,000 grant match was proposed as part of the application. The commission also reviewed letters of support that would accompany the grant application. Members emphasized the importance of this project in promoting regional connectivity and outdoor recreation. Doroh, supported by Godfrey, made a motion to send a letter of support from the Parks Commission indicating that the Commission would contribute up to a \$60,000 grant match. Motion: Carried unanimously.

3. FY 24/25 Budget Requests

a. **Van Buren County Museum:** A \$50,000 allocation was proposed to cover general maintenance and repairs at the Van Buren County Museum. After discussion, it was decided to reduce the allocation to \$30,000, earmarked specifically for building and equipment repairs. It was noted that if the Museum was to be treated as a park, it needs to be added to the Parks Master Plan. A motion was made by Parman and supported by Nelson to approve the \$30,000 allocation. Motion: Carried.

b. **South Haven Buoy:** A \$5,000 allocation was proposed to fund the installation and maintenance of a buoy in South Haven, which serves both navigational and safety purposes. The commission weighed the benefits of this allocation, considering its importance to the local boating community. After discussion, it was decided that this expense should be covered by the general fund rather than the Parks budget.

4. Van Buren County Park – Downtown Paw Paw: A preliminary discussion focused on generating ideas for the further development of the park. Commissioners agreed to engage with Paw Paw residents and Village Officials to explore potential initiatives that the Parks Commission could pursue.

F. Ongoing Business/Reports

1. **Staff Report:** Ransler provided updates on ongoing projects:
 - a. The Kayak Launch project is awaiting a final contract from the state. Once received, construction design and oversight will begin with Abonmarch.
 - b. The Fairgrounds lease discussions are ongoing, with input still awaited from the Fair Board regarding boundary adjustments.
 - c. Continued collaboration with SWMPC on the Blue Star Trail grant application. The Blue Star Trail grant application and match have been added to the project worksheet.
2. **Review of Upcoming/Proposed Project Worksheet:** The worksheet was reviewed, with updates on financial impacts and project statuses provided.

G. General Member Comments and Discussion

1. **Nelson** reported on a new Michigan law making it illegal to follow a snowplow too closely.
2. **Godfrey** mentioned that the ADA-accessible Phoenix Kayak Launch in South Haven is now open and receiving positive feedback from the community.

- H. **Adjournment:** All business being completed, Doroh, supported by Hickmont made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:45 AM with unanimous consent.

Submitted by:

Lisa Ransler

Lisa (Imus) Ransler, Secretary