



Van Buren County Parks Commission

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



Meeting Minutes – November 11, 2024, 11:00 AM Regular Meeting Agenda

- 1. Call to Order & Attendance** – Vice Chairperson John Small called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM.

Present: Vice Chair John Small, Becky Grabemeyer, Kurt Doroh, Wayne Nelson, Daywi Cook, Paul Garrod, Richard Godfrey and Emily Hickmott.

Absent: Chairman Mike Chappell and Joe Parman

- 2. Approval of Agenda** - Motion to approve the November 11, 2024 Agenda by Nelson, supported by Godfrey; Motion: Carried.
- 3. Approval of October 8, 2024 Minutes** – Motion to approve the September 10 and October 8, 2024 minutes by Doroh, supported by Nelson; Motion: Carried.
- 4. Public Comments** - None.
- 5. New Business**

- a. Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan:** The Parks Commission reviewed the proposal from the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) to facilitate strategic planning sessions in January and February 2025. These sessions will focus on updating the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, evaluating progress, revising goals, and developing a detailed budget for the coming years. The cost for this strategic planning portion is \$2,000. The proposal also includes a full update to the Parks and Recreation Plan in 2025, at a cost of \$11,055, to meet MDNR requirements and enable the county to apply for relevant funding opportunities.

Nelson, supported by Cook, made a motion to approve the \$2,000 strategic plan portion of the proposal at this time, with a review of the full plan update later in the year after millage funds have begun to arrive. The motion carried with unanimous consent. Discussion emphasized the importance of scheduling two-hour meetings in January and February to ensure sufficient time for the planning efforts with Marcy Hamilton from SWMPC.

- b. VBC Road Commission Invoice for trail planning:** The Commission reviewed an outstanding invoice from the Van Buren County Road Commission in the amount of \$3,788.88. The invoice covers assistance with engineering services for a bike trail grant application. Bret Witkowski, Road Commission Director, requested payment for this work, noting that Act 51 funds cannot be used for these services.
- c.** Cook, supported by Garrod, made a motion to approve the payment request. The motion carried, with Nelson abstaining.

- d. **MNRTF Contract Award for Development of Paw Paw River Water Trail Access (Kayak Launch) and Abonmarche Contract Award for engineering and design of Paw Paw River Water Trail Access (Kayak Launch):** The Commission discussed the (MNRTF contract award for the development of the Paw Paw River Water Trail Access (Kayak Launch) and the contract award to Abonmarche for engineering and design services for the project.

Doroh, supported by Cook, made a motion to approve both contract awards and enter into the respective agreements. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Ongoing Business/Reports

a. Staff Report: Ransler provided updates on ongoing projects:

- **Fairgrounds Lease Discussion:** The Parks Commission discussed the ongoing lease negotiations for the fairgrounds. Significant progress has been made on resolving the boundary lines with the Fair Board, and it appears a final resolution is near. However, the Commission emphasized the need to address the boundary dispute with the neighbors to the west, including resolving the trespassing issue and cleaning up the garbage, before the lease is finalized. Small reported that he has spoken with the family of the neighboring property owners, who are willing to work toward a resolution. He volunteered to continue discussions with the landowners to help resolve the matter.
- **Land Preservation Board** – The next meeting will be on November 13. Board is looking to apply for state funding this year to add additional land to conservation easements.

b. Review Project Worksheet: no new items were presented.

7. General Member Comments and Discussion

- a. **Nelson** reported the Historical Society had updated their licensing with the State Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA).

8. **Adjournment:** All business being completed, Doroh, supported by Nelson, made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:29 AM with unanimous consent.

Submitted by:

Lisa Ransler

Lisa (Imus) Ransler, Recording Secretary