

**Walworth County Board of Supervisors  
Park Committee Meeting Minutes  
Monday, March 15, 2021  
Walworth County Government Center, County Board Room 114  
100 West Walworth Street, Elkhorn, Wisconsin**

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Chair Nancy Russell called the meeting to order at 2:13 p.m.

Roll call was conducted and the following members were present, either in person or by remote attendance: Chair Nancy Russell; Vice Chair Dan Kilkenny; Supervisor Brian Holt; and Citizen Members Merilee Holst and Mariette Nowak. A quorum was declared.

**Others in Attendance:**

County Board Supervisors: Jerry Grant

County Staff: County Administrator Mark W. Luberda; Director-Public Works Richard Hough; Deputy Director-Asset Management (PW)/Park General Manager Matt Mortwedt; and Corporation Counsel/Director of Land Use and Resource Management (LURM) Michael Cotter.

Members of the Public: Executive Director of Kettle Moraine Land Trust Greg Rajskey; Land Protection Manager Kiera Theys; Chairman of the Whitewater-Rice Lakes Management District Board Rich Charts; Team Lead Ernest Roy; and Environmental Engineer and Riparian Owner Jeff Panek.

**On motion by Supervisor Holt, second by Citizen Member Holst, the agenda was approved with no withdrawals.**

**On motion by Supervisor Holt, second by Citizen Member Nowak, the January 18, 2021 meeting minutes were approved.**

**Public comment** – There was none.

**Consent Items**

7a) Reports

- 1) Park Summary Report – March 2021

**Supervisor Holt offered a motion, second by Citizen Member Nowak, to accept the Park Summary Report—March 2021. Motion carried 5-0.**

- 2) Park Workday Schedule – 2021

Citizen Member Holst discussed the schedule of programs being offered by the Kettle Moraine Land Trust (KMLT) at Natureland Park and Price Park. She felt it would be beneficial to include more educational programs for school aged children, particularly in the summer, since park usage is high during that time. Holst also mentioned there were no educational programs being offered by the Geneva Lake Conservancy (GLC) at White River Park. She requested it be evaluated to see if summer programming could be added to the schedule for all three parks. Chair Russell expressed agreement to the addition of more educational programs. Deputy Director-Asset Management (PW)/Park General Manager Matt Mortwedt stated he would work with both groups to find a solution. **Supervisor Holt offered a motion, second by Citizen Member Holst, to accept the Park Workday Schedule—2021 with the caveat that there may be changes. Motion carried 5-0.**

## **New Business**

### 8a) Kettle Moraine Land Trust to present a report on 2020 Park Activities

Executive Director of Kettle Moraine Land Trust Greg Rajskey provided a brief review of the 2020 Park Activities and future activities planned for 2021. In 2020, KMLT hosted small group restoration projects at Whitewater Lake and Natureland Park with the help of volunteers and county staff. In addition, there were two educational programs hosted at Price Park along with seed collection. The seed collection was for Project Wingspan, which is part of the initiative in the Pollinator Partnership. The ten native species of seeds collected, which are specifically conducive to the support of monarch butterflies and rusty patched bumble bees, were sent to Mason State Nursery to be cleaned and propagated. The seeds and propagated plants will be returned to the area for planting. Rajskey highlighted restoration work days and educational programs planned for 2021. Discussion followed. **Supervisor Holt offered a motion, second by Citizen Member Nowak, to accept the Kettle Moraine Land Trust 2020 Park Activities report. Motion carried 5-0.**

### 8b) Geneva Lakes Conservancy to present a report on 2020 Park Activities

Land Protection Manager Kiera Theys gave a presentation, which covered the following topics:

- The oak savanna planting event at White River Park. Theys expressed gratitude to those who helped with the event and discussed how this could become a biannual event.
- Discussion of oak savannas and their importance, along with information regarding the oak ecosystems in Walworth County.
- GLC's request to include a mowed trail in the park leading to the planting area in addition to installing an educational sign regarding oak savannas.
- Pictures of the families who volunteered during the oak savanna planting workdays. Theys explained there were a variety of oak species planted in different sizes and ages to create diversity in the savanna. Fliers were distributed at those work days, which allowed families to mark where they planted a tree so future generations could come back to see the planted tree.
- GLC hopes that a bench could be installed near the White River in honor of the late Greg Trimmerger.
- The cost of the cages installed to protect the trees were funded by the Griffith Family Foundation. GLC would like to dedicate the savanna in memory of Dean Griffith.
- Due to COVID restrictions, work days were cancelled for 2020, but there are two work days planned for 2021. Also cancelled in 2020 was the Winter Solstice event, but it is planned to be held in 2021.
- GLC was named 2020 Land Trust of the Year by Gathering Waters.

Discussion followed. **Supervisor Holt offered a motion, second by Citizen Member Holst, to approve the Geneva Lakes Conservancy 2020 Park Activities report. Motion carried 5-0.**

### 8c) Acknowledge the award of a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship funded purchase of 15 acres of land in the Town of Troy by The Nature Conservancy.

Correspondence was received regarding this matter in January and the letter states the award was tentative. Mortwedt confirmed the transaction was completed and the land is now owned by The Nature Conservancy. **Supervisor Holt offered a motion, second by Citizen Member Nowak, to place the State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources letter on file. Motion carried 5-0.**

Included in the meeting packet was Resolution No. 110-2020-21 submitted by Outagamie County in support of the reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program for ten years and consideration of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources budget request of \$50 million per year. It was suggested that County Administrator Mark W. Luberda and Corporation Counsel/Director of Land Use and Resource Management (LURM) Michael Cotter craft a resolution similar to Outagamie County's to be sent to the County Board for April's meeting. **Citizen Member Nowak offered a motion, second by Supervisor Holt, to support refunding of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund by resolution. Motion carried 5-0.**

8d) Whitewater Rice Lakes Management District to discuss the Town of Richmond Plan for diversion of Lake Lorraine to Whitewater Lake

Environmental Engineer and Riparian Owner Jeff Panek gave a presentation pertaining to this issue, which details information gathered by the Whitewater Rice Lakes Management District (the District) research team thus far. Significant participation from Walworth County is being sought, as Walworth County is a key stakeholder in this issue. A permit for the installation of a culvert in the Town of Richmond has been submitted to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), however, it is currently pending as the application is incomplete without agreement from the District as the receiving waterbody. Though it has been requested as part of this application, statutorily it is unknown if the lack of an agreement would prevent the project from continuing. The District has submitted a resolution declining receipt of water from the project until more information has been obtained and any concerns have been addressed. In addition, Panek stated the District is willing to support Walworth County by providing information and answering questions to assure there is no relapse on the lake and water quality improvements achieved over the last 30 years. Discussion ensued regarding the level of involvement and impact, as it pertains to Walworth County. Director-Public Works Richard Hough explained after the water travels through a series of culverts on land managed by the District, two Walworth County assets would be impacted as a result: the water discharge flowing through a dam, and increased water into Natureland Park. Citizen Member Holst questioned why a private individual submitted this permit request to the DNR, when it has been considered a Town of Richmond project. Panek explained, the Buol Trust is the owner of the property on which the culvert system would be installed. The Town of Richmond and the Buol Trust came to agreement both financially and regarding potential liability. Luberda explained there is not enough information at this point to make a policy recommendation to the Park Committee. He suggested this issue be referred to staff to look at policies and contact the DNR. Panek expressed concern as the environmental consultant (hired by the permit applicant) is only looking at the excavation of the culvert system and does not consider impacts to the downstream wetlands area of Natureland and Whitewater Lake. Chairman of the Whitewater-Rice Lakes Management District Board Rich Charts also shared his concerns and the concerns of constituents by stating there has been much money spent on fixing erosion issues and cleaning up the water to become delisted from the impaired waters list. He stated there is a large difference in pollutant and nutrient levels from Lake Lorraine to Whitewater Lake. As a result, drainage from Lake Lorraine to Whitewater Lake would have a significant impact on Whitewater Lake's pristine headwaters. A public hearing has not yet been set due to the pending status of the permit application. It was agreed that information should be gathered, as soon as possible, and a special meeting be held prior to the public hearing. Discussion followed. **Citizen Member Nowak offered a motion, second by Vice-Chair Kilkenny to rely on staff to gather information, as soon as possible, and then call for a special meeting. Motion carried 5-0.**

**Reports/announcements by Chairperson-** There were none.

**Confirmation of next meeting:** The next meeting was confirmed for Monday, May 17, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.

### **Adjournment**

**On motion by Vice-Chair Kilkenny, second by Supervisor Holt, Chair Russell adjourned the meeting at 3:35 p.m.**