

**WARREN COUNTY
BOARD OF RECREATION COMMISSIONERS**

500 Mt. Pisgah Avenue, PO Box 179
Oxford, NJ 07863

**February 9, 2021
Meeting Minutes**

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Helbing opened the meeting at 5:06 p.m. and read the Open Public Meeting Notice.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Charles Fineran, Michael Helbing, David Detrick, William Hann, John Halmi

Staff: Corey Tierney, Elizabeth Roy

MINUTES: The January 12, 2021 minutes were reviewed. Mr. Hann motioned, seconded by Mr. Fineran to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Roy spoke on behalf of April Bjorklund who requested the use of White Lake on Friday, August 13th for a wedding ceremony with a maximum of 50 individuals attending. Ms. Roy noted that the county wouldn't be able to ensure the ceremony is not impacted by other guests to the lake on that date, including lake use and parking. Ms. Bjorklund said that the ceremony would be a maximum of 30 minutes and there would be no onsite reception afterwards. Ms. Roy inquired about whether there was a mowed area onsite to accommodate the wedding without cutting off public access to the lake. Mr. Helbing noted that there was a mowed location on the Blue trail (left side of the lake) that would be suitable. Mr. Tierney said that the location on the Blue trail may be too narrow, but that the field adjacent to the parking area may be more suitable. Mr. Fineran suggested a spot near the White Barn may also be appropriate. Mr. Tierney noted that parking would need to be relocated to other areas to accommodate the 50 invitees, perhaps at the Vass House with permission from the township. Ms. Bjorklund mentioned that she is flexible on the specific location. Mr. Detrick noted that he was in support of the wedding as long as park regulations and COVID-19 restrictions are followed.

Mr. Detrick motioned, seconded by Mr. Hann to approve the request pending the details being approved by the Land Preservation Department. Motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Ms. Roy questioned whether or not Mr. Helbing had received a notice from a mushroom gathering group requesting to gather mushrooms at White Lake. Mr. Helbing noted he had received the notice. Ms. Roy explained that any fungi removed from the site will be for research purposes and is done in a manner in which the fungi will grow back again and not be destroyed. Nina Burghardt then joined the meeting and explained that she is a member of the New Jersey Mycological Association, and that her group's "forages" are for identification and research only, not for eating. Nina noted that the group will be limited to 20 people due to COVID-19 and that they would like to forage during the weekend of Saturday, July 31st, and Sunday August, 1st. Mr. Helbing supported the exercise and thought it would be great to identify the fungi at the lake.

Mr. Detrick motioned, seconded by Mr. Fineran, to issue a special permit to the group for the specified weekend, noting in the permit that the mushrooms be used for identification and research only. Motion carried.

REPORT OF COMMITTEES

Morris Canal Committee/Warren Heritage Scenic Byway

Mr. Detrick thanked the Planning Department for their work on the website and story map for the Scenic Byway, and noted that History Committee of the Warren Heritage Scenic Byway Committee will be reviewing the content of the historic sites in the county and will be adding text and photos to help better populate the story map.

Mr. Detrick announced that the Morris Canal Committee met on February 8th and set the following goals for 2021:

- Improve turbine chamber and tailraces at Plane 9 utilizing the \$40,000 grant allotted for the project.
- Develop and install interpretative signage at Plane 5, Plane 6, Plane 9, and the Bilby Road Bridge.
- Develop virtual tours for Bread Lock Park and Plane 9 museums
- Sponsor walks/tours at Bilby Road and Canoe trip at Saxton Falls.
- Establish a memorial for departed member Myra Snook.
- Develop and install a canal boat silhouette for the tow path near Stryker Road.

Mr. Helbing expressed his concern about visitors driving back the accesses at Planes 5 and 6 due to access inaccuracies in the "Field Guide to the Morris Canal" by Jakob Franke, et al. While recent on-line posts containing photos and comments about these locations have been taken down, the book remains in circulation and there have been continued incidents of visitors using the wrong accesses. Mr. Tierney explained that there was signage at the county sites explaining the proper access. The county did not create, promote, or distribute the Franke book and Mr. Tierney stated that the county cannot control trespassers on private property; that landowners will have to call the police if this becomes a problem. Mr. Helbing said that this (trespass on private property) is what he is trying to avoid because the county has developed good relations with its neighbors and private owners of canal sites. Mr. Tierney agreed and commended Mr. Helbing on doing a good job quelling recent tensions.

Mr. Helbing noted that Mrs. Janecko is interested in selling her piece of property that includes the Canal to the county, and would create a continuous access with Merrill Creek Reservoir.

Mr. Helbing discussed receiving pictures of the Canal 8 West off of Lock Street from a neighbor in the area via social media, helping him to identify the locations in several Library of Congress photographs that had not been previously identified.

Trail Committee

Mr. Helbing discussed that there are interim State Park maps for the entire western section that have been created. Several of these maps will encompass both County and State Parks including the Geiger Tract, the Marble Hill Tract, the Warren Highlands Trail, and Merrill Creek. Mr. Helbing noted that he will be reviewing the interim maps and making the proper corrections.

Mr. Helbing noted that he and Mr. Hann worked to clear the red trail at Lopatcong Park along with some other volunteers.

Mr. Helbing said that the two parking lots on Ridge Road have been filled with crushed stone and will have split rail fence installed in the near future. Mr. Helbing also noted that kiosks on Harmony Branch Castle Road and at the Fox Farm gate will have new maps.

Mr. Helbing added that he is also looking into adding new signage in this area describing landmarks, including the historic Miller Farm.

Mr. Helbing discussed that proposed trails on the Water Company/State property near North Main Street, as well as the Buckhorn Creek trail near Hutchinson, is in Land Management Review and that trails will begin to be blazed after final approval.

Mr. Helbing noted that he has been in contact with the Lenape Nation to get a Native American Heritage Site designation at the Native American Communication Center on Ragged Ridge. Mr. Detrick mentioned that having the Lenape Nation come to the ParkFest for a demonstration would be a great addition to the event.

Mr. Detrick discussed that Tom Lizzi would be interested in coordinating volunteers to continue trail development work on west Oxford Mountain in 2021. Mr. Detrick noted that the Parks Foundation would be willing to provide them the necessary equipment. Mr. Helbing said that he would begin communication with Mr. Lizzi and the Conservation Foundation to begin working on the trail.

Mr. Helbing expressed his concern with the area across the street from the west Oxford Mountain site, which is owned by the township, and has not yet to have a fence installed to keep people away from the mines. Mr. Helbing noted that while there is a large berm deterring visitors from the area that includes the mines, it would be best to have a fence there for the sake of safety.

NEW BUSINESS

Matthew Davis Resignation – Mr. Tierney announced the resignation letter of Vice Chairman Matthew Davis and noted that a new Vice Chairman will need to be elected to fill the vacant position. Mr. Hann motioned, seconded by Mr. Fineran, to table the resignation letter from Mr. Davis to the next meeting, so that the Board can further discuss the decision with Mr. Davis. Motion carried.

Administrator's Report

Mansfield Township Auction – Mr. Tierney announced that there was a public auction in Mansfield Township to sell off surplus land, notably a parcel that includes the Morris Canal on Cherry Tree Bend and other parcels of the Canal Greenway which adjoin other County owned land (Block 601.01, Lot 302; Block 601.03, Lots 62.06, 52; and Block 801, Lot 11.05). Mr. Tierney noted that appraisals were expedited for the land and that a letter was sent from the Land Preservation Department to Mansfield Township expressing interest in purchasing the property. Mr. Tierney said that he had heard back from the Township that they received the letter and will discuss it at their next meeting. Mr. Tierney also noted that the auction was held on February 4th, but that the results of the auction were unknown.

Mr. Tierney requested a motion from the Board to purchase the discussed parcels of land if they become available from Mansfield Township. Mr. Fineran motioned, seconded by Mr. Hann, to support acquiring the parcels of land from Mansfield Township if they become available. Motion carried.

Mr. Hann asked where the Cheema property was that was noted in the Administrator's Report. Mr. Tierney replied that the property was located at the abandoned fuel station where Route 46 and Route 31 adjoin.

NEXT MEETING - The next meeting is scheduled for March 9, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT - There being no further business, Mr. Hann motioned, seconded by Mr. Fineran to adjourn the meeting at 6:11 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Matthew B. Duckworth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew B. Duckworth
Community Service Aide