

WARREN COUNTY
BOARD OF RECREATION COMMISSIONERS
500 Mt. Pisgah Avenue, PO Box 179
Oxford, NJ 07863
February 8, 2022
Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Tierney opened the meeting at 5:16 p.m., read the Open Public Meeting Notice

ROLL CALL

Members Present: John Halmi, Michael Helbing, Charles Fineran, William Hann Jr.(entered 5:16), Ray Tobaygo

Board Liason: Dave Detrick

Staff: Corey Tierney, Elizabeth Roy, Jennifer Kruegel, Mike Muckle (left meeting at 5:47)

MINUTES: The January 11, 2022 minutes were reviewed. Mr. Fineran motioned, seconded by Mr. Halmi to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Tobaygo abstained. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

CORRESPONDENCE: None

REPORT OF COMMITTEES:

Morris Canal Committee/Warren Heritage Scenic Byway

Warren Heritage Scenic Byway –

Mr. Detrick talked about the meeting with the Warren Heritage Scenic Byway last week and feels we need to rekindle enthusiasm. There seems to be some Covid apathy and is hopeful to regenerate more interest in the spring.

Morris Canal Committee-

Mr. Detrick said there was continued work on projects that were discussed at the last meeting. There is an Eagle Scout Project that Ms. Roy and Ms. Kruegel are working with the scout on bird habitat and educational components at Bread Lock. It will be an incorporation of Mr. Fineran's eagle silhouettes among other things. Ms. Roy explained that when the Eagle Scout reached out to them to inquire about projects, we were enthusiastic about creating a more permanent structure of Mr. Fineran's What's Your Wingspan display. It's a new project and one that will be planned from the ground up. Ms. Roy has been working with John Parke from NJ Audubon and he has sent over some additional silhouettes and Mr. Detrick's shop crew will be able to project the images on the wood prior to cutting. We wanted to make use of QR codes for people to access informational resources from Audubon regarding the birds. Making a natural interpretive display spanning across Bread Lock Park recognizing the fields along Rickline Rd and the habitat they are providing and give people a sense of what they can do at home in addition to the expansion of Mr. Tobaygo's Pollinator Garden. Additionally, Mr. Detrick advised that a scout had completed a Life Scout Project where the existing bird houses have been completely redone and are appropriate for the area along with signage to a link on how to build a bird house for their own yards. Mr. Detrick and his shop crew are also working on bat houses for the area. A lot going on for people to get some environmental education programming.

Mr. Fineran wanted to make sure that the Eagle Scout won't have trouble with the scope of the project.

Ms. Roy doesn't believe so as we have explained in detail what we are looking for regarding this project and we are scheduling a meeting with him. He has presented the idea to his scout advisor and it was approved.

Mr. Fineran suggested more sites if the scout needs a larger project scope. Ms. Roy feels it could be a foundation and could grow across the county. Audubon is very supportive and enthusiastic about the project.

Mr. Fineran also discussed getting the habitat in the area recognized as a Certified Wildlife Habitat further creating a connection with Audubon. Ms. Roy agrees that it is the goal and will open the parks up.

Mr. Detrick summed up that he and Ms. Roy have been in communication regarding the Saxton Falls sign and stairs and she has reached out to the state to get permission to do that. We talked about the Stryker Road boat silhouette because there is an issue with a power line right of way and we have to stay on the outside of that but also make it visible from the road. One other thing that was discussed was that they were trying to get the prism on the west side of Stryker Road mowed and thought it was best to do it with the DR brush mowers while the ground is still frozen. Mr. Muckle said that their DR brush mower was currently being serviced but it is operational. Mr. Detrick offered the brush mower at Bread Lock Park or Port Colden with a 17 horsepower with a 20" blade. They would like to get it done in the next couple of months. Mr. Muckle suggested bringing Aaron down to have multiple people working on it and will coordinate with Dave and Aaron and will commit to getting it done.

Mr. Helbing wants to also coordinate with Mr. Detrick about getting the kiosk in the ground in the next week or so.

Trail Committee:

Mr. Helbing reported that the Liberty Water Gap Trail and the 9-11 National Memorial Trail comes up to the Portland Colonia Footbridge and they have a nice new kiosk going in there. Tom Drake from Skylands Visitor sent Mr. Helbing a PDF of a nice new kiosk with their brand of map. Mr. Helbing made some trail and date corrections on historical facts. It will be a nice way to promote some of the MCCT projects and other parts of the area.

Mr. Helbing discussed with Tanya Sulikowski, Environmental Specialist with Merrill Creek Reservoir, about being on the Board of Recreation. Mr. Helbing and Ms. Sulikowski got the entire line section of Warren Highlands trail blazed through Merrill Creek from Fox Farm along Merrill Creek's trails and then down to the utility cut and that is finished. The maps for the state and Merrill Creek are being updated and there was a social media blast. Discussed eliminating some of that road walk and using the Merrill Creek boundary to cut over to more state land and then Conservation Foundation property. Ms. Sulikowski is open to that idea which would eliminate .3 miles of road walk. Also met with Harker's Hollow Golf Course again and one of the manager's said they were going to move all the stuff that they dumped on the trail and also given them posts and delineate the trail route to be able to tell where the trail goes. Getting ready to start talking to the Conservation Foundation about the trails there.

Mr. Tierney thought it was great that the trail was completed through Merrill Creek. Ms. Sulikowski is going to be redoing the entire trail system at Merrill Creek. Additionally Mr. Tierney complimented that the Warren Highlands trail going through Merrill Creek that they marked was on already established trails so it won't cause a maintenance burden for them.

Mr. Helbing feels that with Ms. Sulikowski now at Merrill Creek it will be another great partnership. Would like her to come to the meetings as she has a lot of background in land management.

Administrator's Report:

Mr. Tierney did not have too much to add to the report. Still working on a number of the Open Space Acquisition projects as we are moving forward on them slowly.

NEW BUSINESS:

Ms. Roy brought up the Group that wanted to do a Mushroom Foray at White Lake last year and brought up that they wanted to do another one this year. She inquired as to whether or not we could waive their insurance fee.

Mr. Fineran suggested to waive the insurance fee of \$50 because the group is doing citizen science and reporting back to the board what they find and he feels they are doing us a service.

Mr. Helbing agreed but did not want to set a precedent for larger groups that are not of the same type of thing.

Mr. Tierney inquired as to how many people were involved last year. Ms. Roy and Mr. Fineran said it was about 25 people. Ms. Roy said on their application for this year it would be a maximum of 30 people. They asked for permission again to set up tables next to overflow parking on the Voss Farmstead side. Ms. Roy put in a request with the Hardwick Historical Society and it is on their agenda to approve and allow their tables with the pop-up tents to examine their specimens. They tried to keep to themselves last year.

Mr. Tierney feels there were two ways to approach this: 1 could be that it is a small group activity non-profit and we could waive it or 2. Treat them as volunteers and have them sign a waiver. The risks are minimal and seems no different then if a group of people were simply visiting the park. Are they using tools when they sample? Ms. Roy said they do use hand tools but no digging.

Mr. Fineran pointed out that it is more to our benefit as they do events like this all over the state regularly.

Mr. Tierney felt that we could make an exception for small, non-profit groups under 30 people who are conducting beneficial research to narrow the instances where we would waive it as it isn't commercial and they are not selling anything.

Ms. Roy said that they will most likely provide a report again like last year. Last year they found species that were rare or typically not found in our area at all.

Mr. Fineran inquired if we have rules about natural items from county property. Mr. Tierney confirmed that the rules prohibit that and that is where the board would grant them a special permit for that activity.

Ms. Roy said they made it clear that they were not destroying the fungus but only cutting a small piece off for identification purposes.

Mr. Fineran motioned that they be issued a permit but waive the insurance to do the citizen science research. Mr. Hann seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Fineran requested that he be made aware of when the event was happening so he could go and check it out.

Mr. Fineran inquired as to how much Mr. Detrick was charging for the bat houses. Mr. Detrick wasn't sure yet but will look into it if there was a demand.

Mr. Helbing requested if there are any future Eagle Scout inquiries that you put them in touch with him because he has many trail projects that he would like to have some work done on them.

OLD BUSINESS: None

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Detrick requested a status report on the large grant for the trail improvements with the North Jersey Planning Authority. Mr. Tierney said that they have been having their monthly phone calls with state DOT and right now they are going through some environmental permitting. They will be having their first public outreach meeting in March, which will probably be virtual and have the engineer go over the project and what the proposal is and seek public feedback for that. The environmental permitting has been slow moving but still progressing.

NEXT MEETING - The next meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2022.

ADJOURNMENT - There being no further business, Mr. Tobaygo motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Fineran, to adjourn the meeting at 6:01 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Correa-Kruegel
Community Service Aide