

**WARREN COUNTY
BOARD OF RECREATION COMMISSIONERS**

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

**September 14, 2021
Meeting Minutes**

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Helbing opened the meeting at 5:02 p.m., read the Open Public Meeting Notice

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Michael Helbing, Charles Fineran, John Halmi, William Hann Jr.

Guests Present: Dr. Jeff Webber, Dr. Andrea Case

Staff: Corey Tierney, Elizabeth Roy, Jennifer Kruegel

MINUTES: The August 10, 2021 minutes were reviewed. Mr. Hann motioned, seconded by Mr. Fineran to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

*** Meeting minutes from August 10, 2021 will need to be corrected and removed regarding the bus tour of Break Lock Park and Plane 9 on October 27 with approximately 30 people.***

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

CORRESPONDENCE:

Letter of Resignation of David Detrick- Mr. Helbing expressed appreciation for Mr. Detrick's service to the Board of Recreation, which he has been a member of since 2000. Mr. Fineran reluctantly motioned, to accept the resignation, Mr. Halmi seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Fineran reached out to Mr. Detrick to see if there was a way for him to still participate in the meetings to utilize his expertise and knowledge. Although he cannot be a voting member per statute, Mr. Fineran thinks he would still be able to contribute. Mr. Tierney stated that Mr. Detrick is a part of the Parks Foundation and Morris Canal Committee and suggested that perhaps he can act as a liaison for the Board of Recreation, in an advisory capacity. Mr. Helbing suggested giving Mr. Detrick a specific title so he can still participate in discussions, but not be a voting member. Mr. Fineran reminded everyone that Mr. Detrick is still actively involved in helping with County Parks in spite of having moved. Mr. Fineran motioned to have Mr. Detrick act as a liaison on the Board of Rec, seconded by Mr. Halmi. Motion carried.

Mr. Helbing pointed out they were now down two members and suggested if any members from the Parks Foundation were interested, to reach out to them. Mr. Tierney said that it would be acceptable as long as the individual who takes on the role understands the potential conflict of interest and acts accordingly.

Mr. Fineran shared sad news with the board that Frank Gibbs passed away. Mr. Tierney said he was very sorry to hear this. Mr. Gibbs was on the Warren County Agriculture Development Board for many years.

Letter from Dr. Andrea Case- Dr. Case is seeking permission to collect Lobelia specimens from White Lake for scientific research. Mr. Hann motioned to approve the request, seconded by Mr. Halmi. Motion carried.

Email correspondence from Dr. Jeffery R. Webber- Dr. Webber is seeking permission to conduct geologic sampling at White Lake. Dr. Webber explained that the sampling would be non-invasive. Mr. Hann motioned to approve, seconded by Mr. Fineran. Motion carried.

Ms. Roy suggested that the board request the findings from the two researchers whose projects were just approved.

Troop 56 Campout at Bread Lock Park request- Mr. Tierney said this was an annual event which had been held many times in the past and that Mr. Detrick has worked with the group before. The group will campout and then assist with clean-up in the area. They are looking to campout November 12-14, 2021. Mr. Hann motioned to approve, seconded by Mr. Fineran. Motion carried.

REPORT OF COMMITTEES:

Morris Canal Committee/Warren Heritage Scenic Byway

Morris Canal – Mr. Fineran discussed ongoing work of the Canal Committee. There was a wash-out at the bottom of the entrance hill by the bridge to Plane 9. The County is aware and working on it. The Road and Bridge Departments suggested to Ms. Roy that the County pave the areas on either side of the bridge. Another possibility may be to install a longer bridge, but no definitive solution has been agreed upon. Mr. Helbing suggested using cinderblocks and rebar for a more sound structure. Mr. Tierney pointed out the 3 or 4 severe washouts at Plane 9 that have happened during his time in Warren County and that these events will be reoccurring more frequently in the years ahead. He explained the County is working with French and Parrello Engineers on the trail improvements. The bridge wasn't their main focus but the engineer did make suggestions about stabilizing the North side of the towpath bank and reinforcing with a mesh material to hold it in place. Mr. Tierney and Ms. Roy are looking into an overall bridge replacement option, but funding issues are a concern and there is another bridge project in that area which will need to be considered. Mr. Helbing suggested requesting a FEMA grant to supplement the expenses for a new bridge. Mr. Tierney explained that Warren County would likely not qualify under this most recent event. Additionally the County is looking for long-term fixes and FEMA may not be the most appropriate method for obtaining funds for such projects.

Mr. Fineran discussed the purchase of a canal boat commode as an artifact for historical reference. Ms. Roy suggested including Gina to have consistency in documenting historical artifacts obtained. The suggestion for funding the purchase of the commode could come from the Bicentennial Cultural and Heritage Committee.

Ms. Roy said the interpretive signage for the Port Colden area is coming together. Tim Roth recently joined the Morris Canal Committee and he is working with Dave Detrick to complete the signage. There is one thing Mr. Roth still needs information on and anything related to the trolley and the rail. They are envisioning 1 kiosk at the parking area and then smaller ones at individual resource points on the site.

Ms. Roy pointed out wanting the canal museums/sites to move over to some virtual touring. Rich Dobbins stepped away due to family responsibilities. It was suggested to begin video-taping areas like Bread Lock Park and specifically discussing certain resources there to capture memories and interpretation while they are still here then clean it up later.

Cultural and Heritage have an event the first weekend in November there will be a history tour, Plane 9. The tours will be arranged and advertised or others can have the option for self-guided tour.

Morris Canal Tour:

Mr. Fineran suggested directions from site to site to help buses navigate. Ms. Roy noted it may be dependent on the size of the bus as some cannot fit under the tunnels.

Mr. Helbing said the Morris Canal Arch looks in good shape after the storms.

Trail Committee:

Mr. Helbing stated the Marble Hill trail was washed out along River Rd by the high school. Ruts create a hazard and suggested the possibility of a bridge to make it passable. Mr. Tierney said he would inquire with the county engineer to get a status update on that.

Mr. Helbing noted that flooding and people have taken away more of the bridge at Ragged Ridge, on state land. Mr. Helbing placed stones down to replace the area to make it passable.

Mr. Helbing said the cross-walk on Belvidere Rd needs to be worked on and construction along either side will begin to be worked on soon. He will contact Mr. Dech.

Mr. Helbing inquired as to how White Lake was and if anyone had been in touch with Aaron. Mr. Tierney said county staff met with Aaron last week at White Lake and all was good. There was a recent incident with partying in the parking lot; trash was left behind, but otherwise no damage. Mr. Tierney had some positive news regarding a grant from NJ Audubon will have grant funding available to do some work at White Lake. They will meet with NJ Audubon next month.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Administrator's Report

Mr. Tierney reported that the Nicholson Property, two lots has been closed on along the Paulinskill River and White Lake so we are assembling the pieces along the river.

Mr. Tierney reported that regarding the Janecko property we are moving ahead with the appraisals and working on the resolutions.

Mr. Helbing brought up a discussion with Merrill Creek about a connector trails to go in but in the past under Warren Highlands they would have preferred it going through the road.

Mr. Tierney said that Mr. Trontis had sent out emails trying to set up another Warren Highlands Trail Committee meeting but nothing has been arranged as of yet. It would be good to meet the new staff at Merrill Creek for possible future collaborations.

Special Events Rules and Permit Requirements

Mr. Tierney and Ms. Roy discussed the wedding event at White Lake. Went well with no major issues as it was a small wedding with around 50 people.

Mr. Tierney reported that there was a permit request for a 1 year old's birthday party at the Pavilion at Bread Lock Park and the applicant was unhappy about the liability insurance requirement. Due to the fact that it was a small party and there would be no rentals, fires, catering or alcohol, and that such a

group could just appear that day and mete at the park without a permit, Mr. Tierney waived the insurance requirement. Mr. Tierney suggested the board revisit the insurance requirement for small group events. He suggested that the liability insurance could be required only for large groups of 50-100 people or more, or where there will be elements of liability such as rentals, food, fire, etc. Mr. Helbing raised concerns about the growing popularity of the area and not requiring the liability insurance when taking reservations. Additionally he raised concerns about not having someone on site to monitor the reservations. Mr. Fineran pointed out that many places do still require insurance to protect the County. Ms. Kruegel shared other places that run on a first come, first serve basis and how other counties that require special use permits also have park rangers or staff to managing that. One thing that Somerset County Park Commission does at their pavilion, for example, is to have a sign that can be flipped when there is a reservation so that other people don't use the site before the reserved party arrives. Mr. Tierney pointed out that if there was a dispute between visitors over the pavilion rental at Bread Lock Park over the weekend, the enforcement would fall to the state police. Mr. Helbing recommended looking into the language from other park systems and working with the Parks Foundation or Youth Corps to manage the pavilion. Mr. Tierney recommended that it be tabled for the time-being and asked the board to think about.

Mr. Hann gave credit to Steve Ellis for being the crew chief at Marble Hill.

Mr. Helbing mentioned there was someone Mr. Ellis was working with on updating the trail markers. Mr. Helbing is trying to meet with her to make sure it is consistent and she has the appropriate color of paint.

Mr. Hann asked about bringing back in-person meetings. Mr. Tierney stated the Webex meetings will continue. The county directive was that where virtual meetings were possible that those meetings should be preferred.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

NEXT MEETING - The next meeting is scheduled for October 11, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT - There being no further business, Mr. Hann motioned, seconded by Mr. Fineran, to adjourn the meeting at 6:27 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Correa-Kruegel
Community Service Aide