

FOREST, PARKS, AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Douglas County Board of Supervisors

Monday, January 4, 2021, 9:30 a.m., Board Room, Second Floor, Government Center
1316 North 14th Street, Superior, Wisconsin

Meeting called to order by Chair Liebaert.

ROLL CALL: Present – Mark Liebaert, Mary Lou Bergman, Joseph Moen, Steve Long (remote), Nick Baker (remote). Others present –Shelley Nelson, Angela Botner (remote), Candy Anderson (remote), Jon Harris, Craig Golembewski, Clint Meyer, Keb Guralski, Kaare Berg, Cheryl Westman, Committee Clerk.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion by Bergman, second Baker, approve the minutes from the August 31, 2020, regular meeting, and October 28, 2020, timber sale meeting. Motion carried.

Department Reports:

Budget: Anderson reviewed the budget ending November 30, 2020.

Forest Management Operations: Golembewski reported busy December; 9 active sales, 3 completed sales hauling. Markets improving – had 14 direct timber sales of which 5 were recently sold. Foresters busy preparing for March auction; site prepped 277 acres; WDNR completed furrowing work; seedlings in cold storage in Hayward ready to plant in the spring. LTE Forester positions posted for 2021.

Parks and Recreation: Meyer reported 2 week extension of camping season for 2020 worked out very well; Cranberry Creek dam removal project completed; working with WDNR coordinator putting together a master improvement plan for all dams; emergency action plans getting updated for all dams; and working on getting all of the winter recreational trails open (currently at about 80%).

ACTION ITEMS/REFERRALS:

Warming Shack Installation on County Forest Land Request (Superior Wisconsin Off Road Drivers (SWORDS) ATV Club): Club requesting permission to construct a warming shack/pavilion on County Forest land (estimated cost of \$60,000) at the intersection of the Gandy Dancer and Trail 4, and apply for grant funding from the snowmobile ATV program. Location currently contains a privy. Club to be responsible for all construction and maintenance costs, necessary permitting, and insurance requirements.

ACTION: Motion by Bergman, second Moen, to approve request from SWORDS to construct a warming shack/pavilion on county forest land at the intersection of the Gandy Dancer and Trail 4, and enter into a MOU with the club up for review every five years. Motion carried.

International Dark Sky Park Designation for the Douglas County Wildlife Area Request: Angela Botner requesting to designate the Douglas County Wildlife Area and the St. Croix Flowage/Riverway from the west end of the flowage west and south to the county line (map provided) as an International Dark Sky Park. It would be heralded as a place that it is a valuable asset to the community and a tourist attraction. Light pollution would be identified and managed for the area. Activities would occur to herald the night sky along with awareness and education. Designation does not include any land use restrictions for the county or WDNR and would be at no cost to the county.

ACTION: Motion by Baker, second Bergman, to approve request (letter of support from Forestry Department) to designate the Douglas County Wildlife Area and portions of the St. Croix Flowage and Riverway as referenced as an International Dark Sky Park. Motion carried.

Granting of Easement Exchange Update: Possible Prescriptive Rights Litigation: Harris advised that approximately one year ago three property ownership line issues were identified through a certified survey the

department contracted, two of which have since been resolved. Remaining unresolved issue involves a driveway off Minnesuing Acres Dive in the Town of Hawthorne and Bennett that accesses 3 privately owned parcels. Survey maps and copies of letters sent to landowners Lambert, Zupke, and Lange in packet. County proposed resolution is exchanging an access easement for use of the driveway amongst and between all 3 landowners and the county (Resolution #14-20). Signed easement from Lambert has been received. Communication with Zupke and Lange has been very difficult. Repeated phone and written attempts have been virtually ignored. County has been using this driveway for many years to access its land and according to legal counsel opinion, has accrued prescriptive access rights and could file a lawsuit to legally establish these rights.

ACTION: Motion by Baker, second Bergman, to provide Forestry Department authority to resolve matter in any means deemed necessary, while protecting the county's best interests, including approval to take legal action. Motion carried.

Blanket Pesticide Ordinance #1.17 Exemption Request (Forestry Department): Application in meeting packet - requesting blanket permission to chemically treat minor localized occurrences of invasive species infestations on all lands owned and/or managed by the Forestry Department (NR 40 species list in packet), alleviating the need to come back to committee for each individual request to address small outbreaks as they are discovered. Request includes approval for initial approval for initial treatment as well as follow up treatments as necessary.

ACTION: Motion by Baker, second Long, to approve Blanket Pesticide Ordinance #1.17 exemption request from Forestry Department as outlined above. Motion carried.

2021 Department Annual Work Plan: Reviewed – required annually by the state.

ACTION (RESOLUTION): Motion by Baker, second Bergman, to approve 2021 Department Annual Work Plan, and forward to County Board. Motion carried unanimously.

2021 Annual WDNR Recreational Trail Grant Program Participation: Annual approval required by state for WDNR Recreational Trail Grant Participation.

ACTION (RESOLUTION): Motion by Bergman, second Baker, to approve 2021 annual WDNR Recreational Trail Grant Program participation, and forward to County Board. Motion carried unanimously.

Town of Wascott Property Acquisition:

Property Acquisition: Property owner interested in selling five – 40 acre parcels in the Town of Wascott to Douglas County. Parcels are surrounded by Douglas County Forest Lands and have access and forest management value. Requesting \$180,000 to purchase parcels, with up to an additional \$5,000 for closing costs and other related acquisition expenses, for a total not to exceed \$185,000.

ACTION (RESOLUTION): Motion by Baker, second Bergman, to approve purchase of five – 40 acre parcels in the Town of Wascott, and forward to County Board. Motion carried unanimously.

Release of Capital Reserve Funding (Land Acquisition): Release of capital reserve funding requested. Funding to come from Cranberry Creek Dam FEMA payment in the amount of approximately \$126,000, sale of 40 acre parcel in the Town of Lakeside, and balance from the land acquisition reserve account.

ACTION (REFERRAL/RESOLUTION): Motion by Baker, second Long, to approve release of capital reserve funding (land acquisition) in an amount up to \$185,000, and refer to Administration Committee and County Board. Motion carried unanimously.

Application for County Forest Law Entry:

ACTION (RESOLUTION): Motion by Bergman, second Moen, to approve application for regular use County Forest Law Entry, and forward to County Board. Motion carried unanimously.

Department Fee Schedule: Only change is to line item 30, charging actual postage for mailing of plat books.

ACTION (REFERRAL/RESOLUTION): Motion by Bergman, second Moen, to approve department fee schedule with recommended fee change as presented, and refer to Administration Committee and County Board. Motion carried unanimously.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS/CORRESPONDENCE/UPDATES/REPORTS:

Town of Summit Encroachment: Tentative agreement reached with individual party responsible for encroachment, including paying for surveying expenses and value of removed timber stumpage. Agreement includes the responsible party assisting the county in acquiring an access easement on an adjacent parcel.

Land and Development Forest Management Services: Three of the six timber sales have been successfully completed with the remaining three planned for completion this winter. The remaining three are all held by the same contractor. Total Forestry Department revenue to date estimated at approximately \$20,467.08 (see report). All three remaining sales expire April 30, 2021.

Extended Timber Sale Contracts: There are 27 high priority active 4th and 5th year contracts. Reminder letters were sent out in early October and again in late December reminding contractors of the importance of completing these sales this winter harvesting season to avoid penalty. Monthly updates will be provided to committee members throughout the winter harvesting season.

2021 Douglas County Park Campgrounds Revenues Report: Reviewed; 2020 produced the highest camping fee revenues in history to date. All signs are indicating high use again in 2021.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Long, second Bergman, to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Submitted by,

Cheryl Westman, Committee Clerk