

Hill County Park Board Meeting Minutes
Timmons Room, Courthouse
Monday, January 8th, 2024, 5:30 P.M.

Board Members Present: Lou Hagener, Mark Peterson, Larry Kinsella, Chairman Jeff Jensen, Pam Wilson, Superintendent Chad Edgar, Vice Chair Tony Reum, Sheri Williams.

Board Members Absent: Ursula Brese, Jake Strissel

Guests: Ranelle Braaten, Isreal Hale with NMBI, Lee Morse, Patric Johnston HDN.

Approval of Minutes: Larry made a motion to approve the December minutes. Seconded by Mark. Motion Passed.

Approval of Agenda: Mark made a motion to approve the January 8th agenda. Seconded by Larry. Motion Passed.

Public Comment on Agenda Item/Agenda Requests: Lou stated the monitoring progress report will be written up for presentation at the February meeting and asked that it be put on the agenda.

Cabin Business: NA

Old Business:

Lodge: Still working with A&E, the design is pretty well set, running into pricing issues with the heating system. A Lodge Committee meeting will be set for this week to discuss the heating system more. The price from A&E and their mechanical engineer was received. Geothermal heating is \$296,000, Electrical boiler system is \$87,800, and Propane boiler option is \$78,400. Jeff stated we are already hurting for money and looking at the prices we might already see which way we have to go. The donated equipment, which is absolutely wonderful that they did that for us, is unfortunately way oversized, for it to operate correctly and not be detrimental to the equipment itself. Looking at adding the Geothermal at a later date, currently it's not feasible. The Lodge committee meeting was set for tomorrow, so the committee can get an answer back to A&E, and to get things moving on the final design, so we can get it out to bid. Jeff stated that things will be moving fast in the next week and a half for what they are doing.

Pam asked if the facility will be year-round as there will be no use of the cabins, and people won't be able to get their campers or RVs out there. Lou offered that yes; we have been using the facility in just the summertime and he thinks that we need to take the opportunity to expand the season, especially as an educational venue and those sorts of things. We need to plan for the future, not necessarily what the past has been.

Finance and Rules Committee Draft/Composition: Lou displayed the drafted version of guidelines for the Board to discuss. They spoke about how often the committee will meet as it was drafted at least twice annually (first; before the Board needs to make recommendations on fees for the coming year and secondly; before the Board makes recommendations on the annual budget). They also discussed how long the terms will run. Four-year terms staggered is how they will run, with the first set up being slightly different as to decide who get a two-year term and who gets a four-year term.

Pam talked about the duties and responsibilities section asking if ten years is to long? What happens if something comes up before then? Is there something for immediate action from the committee or will that be taken care of by the Board? Lou replied stating that's why he said, "at least every ten years". Pam also talks about the first paragraph of the draft, stating she thinks it should state that the R&R and F&P committees should have the date that they have been dissolved, which is October 2nd, 2023. Speaking on the qualifications, stating they need to be more defined going into details of all the extra activities applicants should have an interest in, making sure that they know selection will go off a diverse background and range of knowledge.

Mark stated that this is a living document and can be changed at any time. After a few changes were made it was decided that the board will sit on it and review the draft again at the February meeting. In the meantime, still advertise the interest announcement for open positions on the new combined Finance and Rules committee.

Renewable Resource Grant Watershed assessment/plan/grants - ad-hoc group review schedule: Have not met on the renewable resources grant watershed assessment plan. Lou strongly recommends that they met before the next Park Board meeting. Jeff stated that he is not sure if we will lose control if we adopt something like this in the Park itself. Lou said the larger discussion of this is the watershed assessment is a Beaver Creek watershed wide issue we are only one player in that area the assessment includes Big Sandy Creek. There will be information collected in these streams to update what was done around 2002. Lou continued stating that Emma could talk to it more and he proposes that the three that were assigned can have Emma talk about it. It's a larger issue than Beaver Creek Park watershed issue. Lou stated the assessment of the watershed issue is going to happen whether we want it to or not and how we choose to participate or not is a little further down the road in the whole process. Educating ourselves on how this is going to go, how we participate or choose not to participate is open for further discussion and that's why he would like Emma to come talk about what's really going to happen.

Tony said he talked with the DNRC and NRCS, they have a 30-page plan on what they want to do. He doesn't think anyone here would want to turn the control or management of the Park over to the NRCS. He also stated that he has dealt with them before, and they are not easy to work with. Lou stated that it's a gross assumption that we would be turning it over to them saying he doesn't see it happening that way. Tony replied you have to follow their rules if you're going to take their money. Any organization offering money to get something done will have rules to follow for taking their money, Lou said stating there is a lot more to talk about. Pam asked if this was part of the fencing and everything else? Stating she is afraid they are going to come in and change the dynamic. People from not around here are going to come in and tell us what we have to change, not even knowing our culture.

Tony made a motion to not go on with the watershed grant plan. Seconded by Larry.

Discussion continued about past experiences with similar opportunities. Mark stated there may be some stipulations that we may or may not want to do and he thinks that the Board should go over the information again, read the information Tony has, and ask questions that anyone may have, so we can clearly understand what we are obligated to do upfront before we ever move forward. If there is a chance this may benefit without costing anything other than to look at the study when it's done, he would say there are some good suggestions here. If there is anything that would have to happen before he would be on the negative side. Jeff asked if Emma should come back to the Board again? Mark said if there is a document like Tony says he has, the Board should view it and make our own decision, if there is a question that anyone has then she should come back in. Lou stated that the assessment will happen anyway because it's kind of mandated, this is a multi-step process. Jeff said if this is going to happen anyway why are we discussing this then? Why do we have to commit to anything if it is happening anyway?

Jeff asked for a vote on who would like to continue with the resource grant watershed plan by raise of hands.

All who want to continue with the watershed grant plan raise your hand – 1 Lou.

All who do not want to continue with the watershed grant plan at this time raise your hand -5 Mark, Larry, Pam, Sheri, and Toni.

Motion to not proceed with the watershed grant plan passed 5-1.

New Business:

Repair Doney Memorial: Chad spoke with Frank Leeds Construction. Frank is willing to do the repairs on the roof in the manner that we talked about for no cost, as he was friends with Chad Doney when they were kids.

Mark asked Chad if there are other bathrooms in the same state of repairs. And Chad said, Yes. Mark said that we can use this for information on future repairs. Chad stated that was the plan.

Committee Reports:

Grazing Committee: No meeting yet. Get to the interviews this week.

Group Reports:

Cabin Owner's Report: None

Friends of Beaver Creek Park: None

Superintendent Report:

- Park use is slow, activity by the lake with ice fishermen.
- Conditions are clear with little snow.
- Cattle are off the Park now, for the most part grazing was good.
- Finished 5 picnic tables 2 more almost done.
- All old sheeting and nails removed for the counselor's cabin project.
- Broughs Coulee sign has been put together and installed.
- Dave and Chad took down the cattle signs they will look for a new system for install and take down.
- Cattle numbers tallies ready to start billing.
- Revenue reports on the claims will be a month late. (January meeting reviewed Novembers revenue)

Claims: Pam made a motion to approve the December Claims. Seconded by Tony. Motion Passed.

Public Comment: *Ranelle B.*- asked for clarification on the watershed assessment, stating it's going to be done no matter what, you voted on not participating? Mark P. replied we are not participating at this point. Renelle then asked what is participating? Mark stated, "we will wait and see what the assessments are we will not agree beforehand we need to take a look at the assessment." Renelle stated that the board needs to be open minded about things.

Ranelle B.- Asked about any reach out to the community to see what they want for the Lodge? They are the ones using it. Jeff J. replied that the meetings are open. Renelle asked if there is a place you can send your comments. Stating hopefully, it's a lodge people will want to use, the community who owns it will want to use.

Isreal H. (NMBI)- on the topic of Renewable Resource Grant, those opposed is it fair to say that the fear was accepting the grant and or participating would come with a perceived obligation that you would have to do what they say because you participated and taken their money, so you feel obligate. Mark replied it comes with strings attached.

Lee M.- Talked about the Havre-Comments and Concerns page on Facebook stating the post about prices 95% of the comments are positive. Also stating you guys have lots of people backing you.

Tony made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mark. Motion Passed. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 P.M.

Next meeting: February 5th, 2024, Timmons Room at Courthouse at 5:30 pm.