

Antrim County Parks and Recreation Commission

Minutes (Joint Meeting with Antrim County Parks and Recreation Commission) April 10, 2002 9:04 a.m.

Members present: Mike Crawford, Bob McLeod, and John Conway
Members absent: None
Others present: Jack White, Eileen Wallick, Janet Person, Howard Yamaguchi,
Mark Randolph, Dale Hansen, Pepper, Allen Pecar, Al Luurtsema

1. Meeting called to order at 9:04 a.m. Introductions followed.

2. Organization and Projects – Parks and Recreation Commission

Howard Yamaguchi distributed a handout outlining the role of the Parks and Recreation Commission in the County government. In response to a question concerning the organization chart, Bob McLeod explained that the Antrim Creek Natural Area is set up differently because 2 of the 5 Commission board members have to represent Banks Township.

Mike Crawford explained to the attendees why the Parks and Recreation Commission was re-organized. There is currently a great need for a reorganized Parks & Recreation Commission to work on urgent parkland planning projects.

Jerry Dobrzelewski, representing the County Road Commission, was not informed of the meeting, and was absent. He replaces Vic Schuler. Mark Stone, current Drain Commissioner, typically cannot attend morning meetings. He may be replaced on the board by another county resident. If necessary, at the next Parks and Recreation meeting, this person will be identified, nominated and a recommendation made to the Parks Committee for appointment. Pepper Bromelmeier inquired if there are any bylaws for this organization. Mike Crawford responded that there is none, being a non-statutory advisory group for the Parks Committee. Janet Person of the Conservation District (who joined the meeting at 9:50 a.m.) confirmed Mike Meriwether's participation as a full-time Parks and Recreation Commission member.

The meeting participants discussed a list of projects for the Parks & Recreation Commission. Wetzel Lake is the priority project, concentrating on Eastern side of county where there are currently no County parks. Mike Crawford explained that DNR cannot sell the state forest land to the County (deed restrictions), but the

County can lease the land. Antrim County will be working with the DNR land manager in Gaylord. John Conway noted that Mancelona Township only obtained a 3-yr lease with DNR for their current operation there; the County will need a much longer lease (99 years?) to justify major investment into the park. The Parks and Recreation Commission will need to enter into a working relationship with Chuck Johnson (Mancelona Twp Supervisor) and the township board to plan the number and types of sites (and total acreage) at Wetzel Lake, and the management thereof. (DNR seems to want more primitive-type sites).

Other projects for the Parks and Recreation Commission include Barnes Park (assistance with planning for trails and other facilities), Bellaire-Alden trail systems (large segments that lie outside the Grass River Natural Area), and the Elk Rapids Day Park. Mark Randolph noted that the trail system needs attention. Mike Crawford indicated that many owners of bits of former railroad ROW in Helena Township are not interested in the trail. Mark noted that he had briefed the Helena Twp Parks and Rec Commission on the engineering study for the trail system, and the township Parks and Rec Commission is contacting local landowners.

Some discussion ensued on whether or not to have facilities for RV camping at the Day Park. Bob McLeod noted that Bob Peterson had mentioned possible reservations by area residents toward overnight camping in the park. The Parks and Recreation Commission will need to study, jointly with the Village of Elk Rapids, and maybe the Township of Elk Rapids as well, how best to use the park.

Howard Yamaguchi requested assistance from the Parks and Rec Commission in composing the Commission's web page. Allen Pecar volunteered assistance.

Mark Randolph proposed minor edits in other proposed scope of work items, such as Parks and Rec plan updates. Al Pecar noted that in updating the Parks and Recreation Plan, the Parks and Rec Commission will need to obtain Microsoft Access files from (former chairman) Larry Feeser and Microsoft Word files from either Larry Feeser or Mark Randolph.

Mike Crawford noted the potential availability of Trimble Consulting for help with Parks and Rec projects.

The Parks Committee and the Parks and Recreation Commission set meeting times as follows:

- Parks and Recreation Commission: Last Thursday of each month at 9 am.
- Parks Committee: First Thursday of each month at 9 am.

Motion by Bob McLeod, supported by John Conway, to recommend to the County Board of Commissioners to adopt the scope of work for the Parks & Recreation Commission as outlined above (and noted in more detail in the meeting handout) - unanimous.

A meeting will be set up as soon as possible with Mancelona Township to start the Wetzel Lake planning process.

3. Barnes Park Report

Eileen Wallick, Barnes Park manager, gave the Barnes Park report (handout). Topics included ADA-compliant wood chips for the playground, electric panel capacity design for the proposed bathhouse, professional assistance for design services, DNR approval of 2002 season rates for Barnes Park, and MNRTF grant update. Also discussed was the need for a point person for coordinating Barnes Park grant project implementation.

Motion by John Conway, supported by Bob McLeod, for Howard Yamaguchi to serve as the point person for Barnes Park grant project implementation. Unanimous.

Bob McLeod suggested that the Committee bite the bullet and engage professional design services for completing the bathhouse design and other services. Mike Crawford reviewed the history of attempts to complete the design elements that our consultants allowed to “fall through the cracks.”

Motion by Bob McLeod, supported by John Conway, to recommend to the Board of Commissioners that they authorize the parks committee chairman to take whatever steps are necessary to expedite the process for completing the design of the electrical and other facilities of the bath house, and commit up to \$1,500 to draw and document, spec out, and provide engineering support for these designs. Unanimous

Howard Yamaguchi informed the group that approval for the 2002 rates for Barnes Park had already been requested from Deb Apostle of DNR. No formal reply has been received to date, but phone conversations with Ms. Apostle indicate that the proposed Barnes Park rates are well within the internal DNR guidelines and will probably get automatic approval. Howard will follow up. Jack White initiated further discussion on the rationale and validity of resident vs. non-resident rates. Eileen quoted studies by the state recommending setting rates at close to our proposed rates, and Bob McLeod noted that rate increases were necessary to enable the park to fund operation and maintenance activities.

Janet Person reported that the MNRTF grant request had been submitted to DNR. She further told the group that she had briefed Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus in Traverse City concerning the County-Conservation District partnership exemplified by the work on the grant application.

4. Grass River Natural Area (GRNA) Report

Mark Randolph gave the GRNA report (see handout). Topics included trust fund grant transfer to the county, and the remaining paperwork needed by the County to complete the process.

Motion by Bob McLeod, supported by John Conway, to recommend to the Board of Commissioners that the BOC chairman sign a mineral deeds transfer to the State for GRNA. Unanimous

Mark reported that TEA-21 grant winners were to be announced on April 1, but in the past successful grantees have waited for most of a year to receive the word.

Mark Randolph requested that the County continue to keep the legal pressure on the Banfields to obtain a judge's opinion on the ownership of the railroad right-of-way. He further briefed the group on his vacation plans (paternity), and Grass riverboat use statistics.

Dale Hansen of the GRNA board invited all committee members and Board of Commissioners to the workday on May 4, the unveiling of the new GRNA sign coming up on Memorial Day weekend, and a Pig Roast auction on July 13, 2002.

5. Elk Rapids Day Park

Howard Yamaguchi distributed copies of the minutes of the BOC of May 2000, at which time the BOC voted to deny a request by the Village of Elk Rapids to run a drain through the northern end of the Elk Rapids Day Park. He also distributed a proposed easement document, submitted by the Village of Elk Rapids, which would allow construction of the drain through the park and bind the Village to maintain the sedimentation pond.

Janet Person briefed the meeting on the situation in Elk Rapids at the construction site of the development being constructed on wetlands. Heavy sediment runoff is being observed at the site, and the conservation district has been working with the contractor to minimize erosion damage. The Corps of Engineers is to request the US EPA to take jurisdiction over the wetlands being filled. Original plans for construction were for staged development, but construction appears to be taking place for much more at one time, resulting in numerous violations of the erosion permit. The Village of Elk Rapids has been very cooperative.

Motion by Bob McLeod, supported by John Conway, to defer action on the Elk Rapids Day Park issue until next meeting, when the situation at the site becomes clearer. Unanimous

6. Fenn's Rim

Howard Yamaguchi passed around a proposal to place an ad for Antrim County in the 2002 Antrim County Map Guide by Fenn's Rim publications. Bob McLeod emphasized the need to make it plain to public that Fen's Rim is Mark Stone's (County Drainage Commissioner) publishing operation. Mark Randolph suggested that our web site address be placed on the ad as well.

Motion by Bob McLeod, supported by John Conway, to request the Board of Commissioners to appropriate \$265 to place the ad. Unanimous.

7. Wetzel Lake Update

Janet Person briefed the group that we should work with Bill O'Neil (DNR property manager) to get approval for layout and site. Discussion ensued on how many acres might be needed. State suggests leasing only what's needed, plus buffer (state forest is buffer too)... Parks and Rec Commission should set up meeting at site with Bill after getting idea of what we want. Lease amount for the park lands should be a nominal lease amount.

8. Jabara Property

Howard reported that the Jabara property was successfully closed around March 20. The document has been sent to DNR to start the reimbursement process. Bob McLeod asked whether or not rehabilitation of the railroad truss bridge is part of the contract. Staff will check.

9. Communications

Howard noted that the Conservation District informed him that the infrared black-and-white photos of the county acquired for master planning and land use analysis may not be of the type required. Howard will look into the matter.

10. Member/Public Comment

Al Pecar initiated discussion on the status of the County Environmental Education Coordinator. Bob McLeod indicated that MSUE has a half-time position for that function. Janet Person noted that initial grant funding for the MSUE position had not come through, and further grant applications were submitted. Currently the county and MSUE is waiting to hear from the granting agencies. Mark Randolph noted that Grass River is planning on a new nature education center. When that facility is complete, GRNA will also need a half-time education coordinator. Hence the proposed county position may be a good match to fill the other half of the GRNA education coordinator's time.

11. Closed Session 11:50 a.m. to 12:10 p.m.

The Committee went into closed session at 11:50 a.m., and returned to open session at 12:20 p.m.

Motion by Bob McLeod, supported by John Conway, to recommend to the Board of Commissioners that Grass River Natural Area regular employees be allowed to participate in the MERS program through Antrim County, with all expenses to be borne by Grass River Natural Area, Inc. Unanimous.

Meeting Adjourned 12:20 p.m.

Next meeting on Thursday, May 2, 2002 – 9 a.m.

Antrim County Parks and Recreation Commission

April 25, 2002

Minutes

Members Present: Jerome Dobrzelewski, Al Luurtsema, Alan Pecar, John Conway, Mike Crawford, Pepper Bromelmeier, Mike Meriwether

Members Absent: Jim Ferguson and Mark Stone

Staff Present: Howard Yamaguchi and Eileen Wallick

Others Present: Jack White

I. Call to Order

Mike Crawford called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

II. Introductions

Jerome Dobrzelewski introduced himself as the newest member of the Parks and Recreation Commission. Mr. Dobrzelewski represents the County Road Commission, and is currently the assessor for Warner Township. Previously, he served for several decades as the township supervisor. Members of the Commission in turn introduced themselves to him.

III. Election of Officers

Mike Crawford called for the election of new officers for the Commission. The term of the officers will be one year from the date of this meeting.

Jerome Dobrzelewski **nominated for Chairman by John Conway, support by Al Luurtsema; nomination closed, vote unanimous.**

Al Luurtsema **nominated for Chairman by Alan Pecar, support by John Conway; nomination closed, vote unanimous.**

Staff will continue to take minutes of the meeting as before. The Parks and Rec Commission will meet **monthly** until further notice, on the **fourth Thursday** of each month. This will normally fall on the week before the county Parks Committee meeting.

Pepper Bromelmeier reminded the meeting that several additional potential candidates were mentioned for possible inclusion in the Parks and Rec Commission. Follow-up is needed.

IV. Wetzel Lake Project

Extensive discussion took place on the Wetzel Lake project, centering on three major themes: financing of the project and extent of Mancelona Township commitment, type of camping appropriate for the site, and the acreage required for acquisition from DNR.

Mancelona Partnership and Commitment Alan Pecar briefed the group on his visit to the Mancelona Township meeting. He noted that the Township is trying to economize, and is not sure to what extent they can participate with the County in maintaining the property. Discussion that followed indicated that the level of interest in this project by local residents is, however, very high. Potential DNR involvement was also discussed, but the conclusion was that DNR's involvement would be highly unlikely, given that they are cutting back on programs, and have abandoned the site in the past. Local residents feel that the County should have some recreation presence in that area of the county (131 and 66 corridors), and the county in the past has considered developing Wetzel and Sand Lakes for recreation. The county can take the lead in obtaining grants to finance the establishment of the park, but the Township must have a commitment to participate in this project if the County is to provide seed money for the project. Historically, the County's level of spending on projects has been influenced by Barnes Park revenue surpluses or lack thereof. Mancelona Township is going through the birth pangs of a new sewer and water authority, and funding for other projects may be difficult in the near term. Some arrangement involving oil and gas leases in the area was discussed. The chair indicated that he will meet with Mancelona Township to get a definite reading of their commitment before the next meeting on May 23.

Appropriate Level of Camping Discussion also ensued on the type of use for which Wetzel Lake should be designed. The site appears to be ideal in its current state for a day park use, but could be upgraded to higher uses if funding is available. If we cannot station staff there all the time, even primitive camping may not be a good idea. Drop boxes for fees (honor system) and park staff visiting the site on a daily basis for collection and maintenance may be sufficient. A County police cruiser may be persuaded to visit the site regularly. Planning for an electric campsite was mentioned (allowing stationing a host trailer on site), but further discussion indicated that DNR may frown on leasing land for electric sites. In either case, the main goal is to plan to proceed one step at a time, first to acquire the property, then implement a primitive site before considering further upgrades of the park.

Leasing Property from DNR Bill O'Neil is the DNR contact for leasing Wetzel property. John Conway suggested a 99-year lease from the State so that long-term planning and capital investment can be performed. Preliminary site layout by County Parks staff and Antrim Conservation District staff indicated that a 33-site campground might be feasible. Discussion ensued on the optimum acreage to request at this stage. DNR suggests that we ask for only what we need for the campsite, and not include additional acreage for trails and such beyond what is needed for the camping activity. Initial estimates indicated 80 acres might be sufficient, but further discussion indicated that 100 acres would be preferable. A formal engineering design is not required before the team meets with Bill O'Neil.

V. Cedar River Natural Area (former Jabara and Skaff properties)

Mike Meriwether noted that the railroad trestle bridge on the former Jabara property requires replacement --- it is an accident waiting to happen. Mike further noted that the Conservation District could mobilize a prison crew to do the repairs if so directed. Mike Crawford noted that the Parks Committee will discuss the issue, and turn the matter over to the Parks and Rec Commission with a clear scope of work. Mike Meriwether then displayed a photomosaic of the Cedar River natural area, showing the extent of the contiguous areas. Mike indicated that the Conservation District will perform extensive streambank work in the area in the coming months. He also noted that to re-establish game fishery in the river, a hatchery such as the publicly-owned facility on Kern River, California, may be appropriate.

VI. Elk Rapids Day Park

Another project is the Elk Rapids Day park. Together with the Village, the Parks and Rec Commission must decide whether or not to develop the site further, or leave it like it is. Mike Meriwether noted that there will be a vegetation management issue, should the park decide to develop the park further: trees and poison ivy will have to be dealt with. Mike Crawford explained the history of the project, and noted that County has no intention of handing over the park to the Village, preferring instead to plan jointly with the village and develop accordingly. Commission members briefly discussed the pros and cons of primitive campsites, open campsites, and electrified campsites to alleviate the load on (or take overflow from) Barnes Park. Pepper suggested a tent-only primitive camp site, since there are residential areas around the park.

VII. TEA-21 Trail Grant Update

Howard Yamaguchi reported while the grant results were supposedly mailed out on April 1, we have not yet heard from DOT. However, he noted that Eric Cline reminded us that the County discovered that a previous grant had been awarded only after a one-year wait *after* the supposed grant award date.

VIII. Helena Township Parks & Rec Master Plan Update

Howard Yamaguchi will circulate the Helena Township Parks and Rec plan to the Commission members for comment using a routing slip method.

IX. Barnes Park --- adjacent lots

Eileen Wallick noted that one of the lots adjacent to Barnes Park (the one with the house) is now for sale again. The chairman directed staff to gather information on the market price for all three lots adjoining Barnes Park so that an acquisition project could be placed on the list of future projects of the Parks and Rec Commission.

VI. Adjournment

Motion at 10:50 a.m. made by John Conway, seconded by Al Luurtsema, to adjourn the meeting. Unanimous.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be the regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, May 23, at 9 a.m.

Antrim County Parks and Recreation Commission

May 23, 2002

Minutes

Members Present: Jerome Dobrzelewski, Al Luurtsema, Mike Crawford, Mike Meriwether, Mark Stone

Members Absent: John Conway, Jim Ferguson, Al Pecar, and Pepper Bromelmeier

Staff Present: Howard Yamaguchi, Eileen Wallick, Stan Moore

Others Present: Jack White, Janet Person

I. Call to Order

Jerome Dobrzelewski called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

II. Minutes of April 25, 2002 Meeting

Al Luurtsema suggested that "Mancelona" be changed to "Antrim County" in the section referring to police patrols at Wetzel Lake. Change and minutes accepted.

III. Wetzel Lake Park

Jerome Dobrzelewski visited Bill O'Neil at DNR. DNR is willing to lease lands and have improvements made, but needs a site plan so they know what's being asked for. Information includes number of camping areas, access routes, swimming area, etc. Howard noted that Consultants will charge about \$5,000 for such a preliminary plan. Mike Crawford and Mike Meriwether felt that a sketch, rather than a formal engineering plan, was what was needed. Mike Meriwether will prepare one for the next meeting. Janet Person noted that this year's Rotary Charities grant, due in September, can finance a planning project such as Wetzel Lake. Conservation District can help with the grant application; a conceptual plan will raise chances for winning a grant.

Jerome also briefed the meeting on his attendance at the Mancelona Township board meeting, where he brought up the Parks and Rec Commission's ideas on the park. Some concerns raised by the attendees were the size of the park (100 acres); one noted that a park with 40 acres leased from DNR in Kalkaska Co. has 30+ campsites situated on 7 acres. Mike Meriwether noted that the additional acreage allows for future expansion and more opportunity for trails and such. Main concern of the township was the extent of commitment requested of them. We need to come up with a proposal on the split of duties between the County and the Township. Mike Crawford noted that the original concept was for the County to build, and the day-to-day operation be performed by the Township.

Mike Crawford and Eileen Wallick briefed the group on the visit to Wetzel Lake by a DEQ officer. The DEQ officer confirmed that the site appeared suitable for 30+ overnight campsites, and that a bathhouse with septic field and dump station for trailers might be appropriate, provided there is enough land. Alternatively, a holding tank drained by regular visits by honey bucket trucks might be appropriate. There are no regulations for fencing the sinkhole, and may have to pay attention to the erosion, etc. Need stairway up/down hill.

Another citizen concern at the Mancelona meeting was the cleanliness of the area and the situation under water. Jerome thinks that we should leave trees, etc. in the lake. Janet Person noted that we should send divers in water, because a lot of potentially hazardous materials may be in the water. Charlie Grimwood may be helpful.

In summary, Jerome noted that an overall feeling by the Township toward this project is positive. They need to know what level of commitment is being asked of them.

IV. Elk Rapids Day Park

Mike Meriwether and Jerome Dobrzelewski made inspections of the park. Mike marked out 25 hazard trees for felling; Eileen Wallick took most of the trees out, and Mike felled the rest.

The Commission is trying to get old development plans for the ER Day park from Elk Rapids Township, and is awaiting response. Howard also has a call in to Warren Studley, former head of the US Soil Conservation Service. The ensuing discussion noted that up to 7 to 8 more primitive campsites can be developed easily with minimal tree prep, and can keep sites minimal to avoid offending neighbors. The County maintains the park, ER police comes in for vandalism. Parks and Rec will check out expandability of water system (water heater etc) at site. There is a large bathhouse, on the city sewer system. Howard will work with Eileen to get mechanical and electrical quotations from contractors for upgrading bathhouse and bringing electrical system up to code (and later for future electrical campsites).

Mark Stone suggests that before any steps are taken to change the use of the park, the township and village should be approached, as many well-heeled neighbors may bring legal challenges. The chairman directed Howard to send a letter to Elk Rapids township and village (Parks & Rec Commission) about limited overnight camping area, ask for opinions and input.

Eileen noted a potential liability problem at the Day Park with the water valve supplying the park with drinking water. County prosecutor advised Eileen that the liability is the Village's.

V. TEA-21 Trail Grant Update

Howard Yamaguchi reported that rumors have come in that we did NOT win the Trail Grant. However, formal correspondence to this effect may be a while in being issued (if at all).

VI. Helena Township Parks & Rec Master Plan Update

Howard ascertained that the Master Plan Upgrade document was indeed making the rounds of the Parks and Rec Commission members.

VII. Barnes Park --- adjacent lots

Howard reported that the realtors are asking for \$164,500 for the lot containing the cabin. Communication from Kim Schmidt, Torch Lake township assessor (and supervisor), indicates that his estimate of 2003 values for the two vacant lots are between \$35,000 to \$40,000. His estimate of the 2003 value for the lot with the cabin is \$90,000 to \$110,000.

Janet indicated that DNR trust fund dollars may be available for land acquisition, and that this may be part of a grant application. A 25% county match (on bargain sale value) is typically required. Janet suggests that the county meet with the DNR officer as soon as possible because the grant deadline is August 1. Mark Stone opined that this acquisition may not score high on the DNR's evaluation system, as ecology points will be low--- need to emphasize facility improvement aspect. Mike Meriwether pointed out that much of the undeveloped Barnes Park land is deeded as forestland. Janet will work with sellers and land conservancy, making initial contact before the next BOC meeting. Mark noted that this proposal will have tremendous support from Eastport for park expansion.

Howard updated the meeting attendees about the construction project scheduled to commence at Barnes Park after Labor Day.

VIII. New Members

Mike Crawford suggests Robert Hardy, Forest Home Township, as an additional member of the Parks and Rec Commission.

VIII. Adjournment

Motion at 10:39 a.m. made by Mike Crawford, seconded by Al Luurtsema, to adjourn the meeting. Unanimous.

Next Meeting Date

**The next meeting will be the regularly scheduled meeting on
Thursday, June 27, at 9 a.m.**

Antrim County Parks and Recreation Commission

June 27, 2002

Minutes

Members Present: Jerome Dobrzelewski, Al Luurtsema, Mike Crawford, John Conway, Jim Ferguson, Al Pecar

Members Absent: Mark Stone, Mike Meriwether and Pepper Bromelmeier

Staff Present: Howard Yamaguchi and Eileen Wallick

Others Present: None

I. Call to Order

Jerome Dobrzelewski called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

II. Minutes of May 23, 2002 Meeting

Howard summarized the minutes of the previous month's meeting to the Commission. Some discussion ensued on the recent sale of one of the vacant lots enclosed by Barnes Park. On the issue of additional members for the Commission, Jim Ferguson will contact Bob Hardy to invite him to sit on the Commission.

Motion by Mike Crawford, supported by Jim Ferguson, to accept the minutes of the Parks and Rec Commission meeting of May 23, 2002. Unanimous

III. TEA-21 Trail Grant Funding and Bellaire Golf Club

Howard informed the Commission that the TEA-21 grant application, which was thought to have failed based on unconfirmed reports, turns out to have been successful. Grass River Natural Area received communication from MI DOT that in September, the proposed project will either be funded or will receive a "commitment to fund." Jerry Dobrzelewski noted that given MDOT's current financial problems, funding would probably not be available this year. Mike Crawford informed the Commission that he will confer with Mr. Banfield to attempt to resolve the right-of-way issue for the disputed railroad grade.

On a related issue, Mike Crawford noted that the Board of the Alden Bank was considering the possibility of having the County acquire the Bellaire Golf Course if the County could put the funding together. Discussion ensued on examples of successful municipal and county golf courses. Jim Ferguson will investigate funding possibilities with Jane Person, and Mike Crawford will continue contacts with the Alden State Bank.

IV. Wetzel Lake

Howard presented the proposed split of responsibilities between the County and Mancelona Township for the planning, construction, and operation of the proposed Wetzel Lake Park. After some discussion, the chairman instructed Howard to forward the proposal to Mancelona Township to start discussions, and to request a slot in the agenda for the Township's August board meeting.

V. Elk Rapids Day Park

Staff distributed the letter from Warren Studley, the previous head of the US Soil Conservation Service in Antrim County (Pepper Bromelmeier's predecessor). Mr. Studley outlined the history of the acquisition of the Elk Rapids Day Park by the County, and emphasized that the assent of the residents and neighbors around the park was obtained only with the condition that the park be developed as a day-use park. Mike Crawford opined that there probably was no binding agreement to that effect when consensus was achieved in the 1970's, and that the Village residents and neighbors might be open to suggestions for non-motorized overnight camping at the site. Jerry Dobrzelewski agreed that this might indeed be the case, and that planning should perhaps proceed along those lines.

Howard noted that the County's Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan calls for capital improvements in the ER Day Park for FY 2003. He suggested that funds be requested in next year's budget for consultancy services to take planning beyond the preliminary planning and layout that could be done in-house. Howard also distributed a draft of a letter to Elk Rapids Park and Rec Commission and requested input. After some discussion, the Commission decided to hold correspondence with the ER Parks and Rec Commission until the time the planning process commences for the Day Park.

Eileen noted that \$1,500 has been included in the FY2003 Parks budget request for upgrading the electrical system at the Day Park. In response to Jerry Dobrzelewski's query about whether an opinion on the costs from the County Building Department is required, Mike Crawford stated that the upgrades are mandated by building code, so the work should proceed. On the question of timing, it was decided that if the funds are available for this year, the work should proceed as soon as possible. Mike Crawford suggested that the Parks and Rec Commission conduct a site visit to the Day Park during one of the weeks after the July 4 weekend.

VI. Helena Township Parks & Rec Master Plan Update

Howard noted that comments had been received from half of the Commission, and that those comments had been forwarded to Helena Township. The other circulating volume has not yet been received at the Coordinator/Planner office.

VII. Jabara Property RR Trestle Bridge

The subject of the unsafe RR trestle bridge on the Jabara property came up. The bridge is unsafe, and must be replaced. The parks committee would be the one implementing any changes, and would have to secure the funding for bridge work. Some discussion ensued on what could be done (semi-permanent barriers on either end, etc.) in the meantime.

VIII. 2003 Budget for Parks and Recreation Commission

Howard introduced the proposed 2003 budget to be submitted at the Parks and Rec Commission at the Parks Committee meeting on July 2. Howard recommended that consultancy services be added to the budget request, and other Commission members noted that additional travel and per diem may be required should membership increase. The budget request was amended to add \$8,000 for ER Day Park consultancy services, and to increase by \$250 the per diem line item and by \$40 or so the travel line item to accommodate a possible new member.

IX. Other Matters

Eileen noted that Torch Lake charges non-residents \$5 to use the township landing site. This had resulted in a shift of traffic and parking to the north end of the lake. This, however, appears to be a problem for DNR's action rather than the County's.

Al Pecar noted that it might be worthwhile to have MSU evaluate, or dig up references to, the benefits and costs of establishing additional parkland in the vicinity of a local government. This may go a long way to obtain Mancelona Township's buy-in for operation of the proposed Wetzel Lake park.

VIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

Next Meeting Date

**The next meeting will be the regularly scheduled meeting on
Thursday, July 25, at 9 a.m.**

Antrim County
Parks and Recreation Commission
July 25, 2002
Minutes

Members Present: Jerome Dobrzelewski, Al Luurtsema, John Conway, Jim Ferguson, Al Pecar, Mike Meriwether
Members Absent: Mark Stone, Mike Crawford, and Pepper Bromelmeier
Staff Present: Howard Yamaguchi
Others Present: Jack White

I. Call to Order

Jerome Dobrzelewski called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

II. Minutes of June 27, 2002 Meeting

Motion by Jim Ferguson, supported by John Conway, to accept the minutes of the Parks and Rec Commission meeting of May 23, 2002. Unanimous.

Jerome Dobrzelewski requested clarification of one item on the minutes: the matter of the lots adjacent to Barnes Park. Howard related the recent history of the three lots' being considered for purchase by the Board of Commissioners, and the abandonment of the effort due to the extraordinarily high price for which one of the lots was recently sold.

III. New Member Update

Jim Ferguson reported that he had contacted Bob Hardy for a possible appointment to the Parks and Recreation Commission. Mr. Hardy turned down the opportunity, citing his recent retirement from his profession and public affairs. The consensus of the Commission members was that Mr. Hardy would have been a good addition, given his background.

Mr. Ferguson suggested Mr. Jerry Bash, recently retired from AAA, as a possible candidate. As the consensus of the group was to add another member, Jerry Dobrzelewski instructed Jim to invite Mr. Bash to the next Parks & Rec meeting.

IV. Wetzel Lake

Howard informed the Commission that Jerry Dobrzelewski is on the agenda of the August meeting of the Mancelona Township Board (third Monday of August at 7 p.m.). John Conway volunteered to attend the meeting with Jerry.

John Conway noted that the township is still interested and positive about County involvement with Wetzel Lake. He suggested that further interest and support could be garnered by having the news media report the meeting between the County and the township.

V. Elk Rapids Day Park

Howard briefed the Commission on the recent dye study conducted by Eileen Wallick, her staff, and plumbing contractor G. Mosher to ascertain whether or not the Day Park facilities were indeed hooked up to the Elk Rapids sewer system. The results of the dye study indicated that the system did indeed discharge into the ER sewer system.

Discussion ensued on the possible development of the Day Park as an overnight camping facility. Mike Meriwether will stake out potential primitive campsites, and he noted that existing day sites can serve as initial sites. He also noted that some public relations work may be necessary with neighbors, and that personnel may be required to maintain the park. Jerry stated that with the growth in population of the county and increasing demands on recreational facilities, he could see the Day Park turning into an overnight camping facility. Howard reminded the Commission about his phone conversation with Warren Studley, who stated that he had to personally assure the neighbors (in the 70's) that the campsite would be a day park before their support could be obtained. Jack White did not recall such a restriction being placed at that time (when he was on the township board), and suggested that Howard check with ER township supervisor Bill White to see if any information on such restrictions (and old ER Day Park development studies) may be available. Such information should be gathered before the Parks and Rec Commission enters into a joint planning mode with the Parks and Rec Commission of the village and with the township.

The next Parks and Rec Commission meeting will be held at the Elk Rapids Day Park.

VI. Benefits and Costs of Park Development

Howard was asked at the last meeting to look into studies by MSU and others on the subject. Howard did not produce any results for this meeting, and promised to present his findings at the next meeting. Al Pecar suggested that Howard also look at the results of the past County opinion surveys.

VII. Jabara Property RR Trestle Bridge

The Conservation District has put up some fencing at the site to prevent the public from using the unsafe bridge. John Conway reminded the Parks & Rec Commission about the trailhead dedication to take place at the Jabara Property (now known as Cedar River Natural Area) on August 10 at 6 p.m.

VIII. Bellaire Golf Club

Jim Ferguson reported to the Parks & Rec Commission that should the County be presented with the option of purchasing a golf course, some grant funding from disparate sources may be available, but all sources will require a cash match from the County. Staffing will also be an issue at a golf course. Jerry Dobrzelewski opined that funding and finances are very tight, and wondered if, with so many public lands to manage, the County could also manage what is essentially a private business enterprise. He asked for opinions from the Commission. Jack White agreed with Jerry, and noted that the County needs to decide if it wishes to spend public funds to enter the business.

Jim Ferguson and John Conway noted that the problem with the Bellaire course in the past was mismanagement, and that a correctly managed municipal course could indeed hold its own and turn a profit. John noted many examples of profitable municipal courses throughout the country. The Commission also noted that a municipal course would be an affordable alternative to the expensive golf resorts and developments that exist in our County. In either case, an extensive financial study must be undertaken (examination of statements of the Golf Course) before any decision can be made. Mike Crawford is absent today and hence the Commission cannot receive an update on his contacts with Alden Bank.

IX. Parks & Rec Commission Meeting Frequency

Jerry Dobrzelewski asked the Commission members to ponder whether the Parks & Rec Commission needs to meet monthly after the summer recreation season is over. Should the Parks & Rec Commission be working on winter sport promotion? These will be among the discussion items at next month's meeting.

X. Antrim County Parks Bulletin/Flyer/Publication?

Al Luurtsema distributed a Parks and Recreation Newsletter from Ottawa County. He pointed out that we may need to have a PR campaign (flyers, newsletters?) to alleviate some low usage problems that some County facilities appear to have. Al Pecar related the work done in the past to document County lands. John Conway and Mike Meriwether noted that the fruit of that effort is now the County Lands Book, currently being reprinted. John noted that the information on County parks and facilities are published by UpNorth Publications, and Mike Meriwether noted that the Antrim Conservation District also provides some related information in their newsletter. The consensus of the group was that the information is not available in any one publication.

Al Pecar noted to the group that he has the experience and the equipment to assemble such a publication, and was appointed by the chairman to develop a concept for such a publication for discussion next meeting.

XI. Other Matters

John Conway suggested that the Parks & Rec Commission send a get-well card to Larry Feeser. Howard will take care of it.

Pepper Bromelmeier will brief the Parks & Rec Commission next meeting on the trails work undertaken by the Commission to date, and will introduce possible further work on trails.

Howard briefed the Commission on the lightning strike that hit the night shift employee at Barnes Park on the weekend of July 20. The employee spent two nights in the hospital, and some further doctor visits were necessary.

Howard also informed the Commission about the timetable for the Barnes Park construction projects: the bids for both the bath-house and the playground are due on July 31. Bid opening will be at the Parks Committee meeting on August 1.

VIII. Adjournment

Motion at 10:40 a.m. by John Conway, supported by Al Luurtsema, to adjourn. Unanimous.

Next Meeting Date – Venue Change !

**The next meeting will be on
Thursday, August 22, at 9 a.m.
at the Elk Rapids Day Park
(meet at main entrance)**

Antrim County
Parks and Recreation Commission
August 22, 2002

Minutes

Members Present: Jerome Dobrzelewski, Al Luurtsema, John Conway, Jim Ferguson, Al Pecar, Mike Meriwether
Members Absent: Mark Stone, Mike Crawford, and Pepper Bromelmeier
Staff Present: Howard Yamaguchi, Eileen Wallick
Others Present: Jack White, Jerry Basch, Rose Pecar

0. Elk Rapids Day Park Walk Through

Starting around 9:15 a.m., the members of the Parks and Recreation Commission walked through the Elk Rapids Day Park, with Eileen Wallick and Mike Meriwether guiding the tour and pointing out salient facts to the members. Some items requiring repair were noted. At the conclusion of the field trip, the group adjourned to the Elk Rapids Village Council Chambers to hold the business meeting.

I. Call to Order

Jerome Dobrzelewski called the meeting to order at 10:14 a.m.

II. Minutes of July 25, 2002 Meeting

Jim Ferguson noted that in Item III, in two places, the name "Harding" should be corrected to "Hardy."

Minutes of the Parks and Rec Commission meeting of July 25, 2002 accepted with stated corrections.

III. New Member Update

A potential new Parks & Rec Commission member, Jerry Basch of Intermediate Lake, introduced himself. He taught school 2 yrs in Alba (parents ran a store there), and once worked for Kitchen Farms. He is recently retired from AAA, and has moved back to his place on Intermediate Lake. He would like to give some service back to the county. He has some background in recreation through his previous career.

Motion by John Conway, supported by Al Luurtsema, to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to appoint Jerry Basch to the Antrim County Parks & Recreation Commission. Unanimous..

IV. Nathan Graham, Eagle Scout Candidate

Howard briefed the Commission on his meeting with Life Scout, Nathan Graham of Bellaire. Nathan wishes to do a public service/conservation project at Mohrmann Park in partial fulfillment of his Eagle Scout rank requirements. He tentatively proposes to clear and mark the trails at Mohrmann Park. Howard promised him that he will brief the Parks & Rec Commission, and talk to Mike Meriwether about the project.

Jack White felt that such a project would be a good idea. Mike Meriwether confirmed that there are lots of project possibilities at Mohrmann Park and elsewhere. Mike noted that trails are fairly well established there, but Graham can cut additional trails, and perform other tasks. Mike has many materials for Graham to work on.

V. Wetzel Lake

Jerry Dobrzelewski updated the Commission on the Mancelona Township Board meeting of August 19: Jerry, John Conway, and Howard attended. Jerry presented our position paper on the proposed split of responsibilities. The Twp board will digest it, then will get back to us through Howard. John Conway felt that the Twp board and audience were enthusiastic, anxious to get involved. Jerry noted some statements by the Twp supervisor that might indicate concern at our initial proposal. The Press was there, as was the attorney for the Twp. Responding to inquiries on the type of camping envisioned for the site, the team replied that initially, primitive camping would be proposed. Electrification could be considered later. Erosion going up hill from the beach will need attention. John Conway briefed the Twp meeting on Wetzel's possible part in a future multi-county trail system in the area.

Al Luurtsema asked about any comments at the meeting on sharing responsibility and costs. John Conway noted that the Twp constable offered to police the site as part of the Twp match. Fees and fee collection were brought up: how to handle (drop box, etc). Jerry D. noted that still not settled is where the collected fees go. Jack White thought that if Twp constables take care of the site, the Twp should keep the fees. Jerry D. also noted that we are also asking them to support grant funding cash matches. Al Pecar informed the Commission that the Twp leased the area for years, and had constant problems with supervision. One individual donated time to care for the place, but after he passed away, the site deteriorated. Al Luurtsema asked if there were any time frames for Twp response. Jerry D. responded that there is none, but responses are sure to be forthcoming. Eileen Wallick warned that as a primitive overnight campsite, we may need to post somebody 24 hrs a day at the site, and will need supporting infrastructure (trailer, water, septage, etc.).

In response to a question from Jerry Basch, Jerry D. replied that Sand Lake was discussed in the past. Eventually, DNR took possession of road to and from lake. As to whether the County-Twp cooperation model would be a precedent for future park development, Jerry felt that this would be a pilot to see if the model will work. Al Pecar noted that this would bring the total number of county parks to six

VI. Elk Rapids Day Park

Chairman Dobrzelewski opened the floor to discussions on Elk Rapids Day Park. Suggestions for use of the park as primitive overnight campsite included operating initially on a permit basis as a trial, possibly to groups like the participants of the DALMAC bike ride. Discussion centered on security and on partnering with the Village of Elk Rapids.

The question of around-the-clock supervision of a proposed primitive site dominated the discussion on security. Eileen stated that at Barnes, her staff talks directly to misbehaving patrons, but if things get out of hand, the Sheriff's Department is called in. Jack White noted that policing jurisdiction would lie with the Village police for the Day Park. Al Pecar noted that in the past 25 years of the Parks & Rec Commission, they were always concerned about getting the park closed up at dusk. The fear was that if left open and unsupervised, it would open up the area to vandalism. It was felt that if we have patrons in the park after dark, we would need a full-time staff there overnight. Jack White opined that the presence of other campers should deter vandalism. John Conway noted that other states successfully operate primitive campsites with fees and such on the honor system. Eileen reminded the Commission that operating a campsite requires permits from DEQ and others.

Jim Ferguson recounted a visit by Terri Crandall of the Elk Rapids Chamber of Commerce to the Planning Commission master plan subcommittee. The Day Park overnight camping possibility was discussed at the meeting. The Chamber of Commerce is generally in favor of facilities that would entice people to spend more time in the area. To be good neighbors with the Village, we should obtain the Village's buy-in. Jack White and John Conway felt that the Village should be involved in the same way that Mancelona Twp is involved with Wetzel Lake. Howard noted that Bob Peterson suggested starting with the Village Planning Commission. John Conway agreed to take this up with the Parks Committee, and have it instruct Howard to start contacts with the Village.

VII. Cedar River Natural Area

Mike Meriwether opened the discussion by informing the Commission that Abdeen Jabara wanted to know what our intentions were to develop the area. His concern was that it would develop into a park (like Barnes Park). Abdeen would like to see development of a trail system like Grass River. Mike has not yet checked the deeds to see what restrictions are on deed. Mike also informed him that there are several ways the county can administer property: a) via the Conservation District (ACD), which administers forests under Mike; b) Park Committee/appointed commission system: Parks Committee administers Barnes; appointed commission administers ACNA; independent board administers Grass River. If ACD manages, use/development of the property would be minimal. Parks & Rec Commission needs to discuss these options.

Jerry Dobrzelewski noted that the Parks Committee will have to select from among these alternatives, accounting for any deed restrictions, with the final decision being with the Board of Commissioners. Mike noted that while the Parks Committee currently has no funding for development of the Jabara property, the County Land, Agriculture and Forestry Committee has, through its forestry budget, funds for ACD to cut and maintain trails. Jack White suggested just cutting trails initially and letting local citizens band together for further improvement. Al Pecar reminded the Commission that Grass River Nat'l Area (GRNA) developed over 25-30 years: individuals banded together initially, and over time organized themselves as non-profit. The County usually goes along with decisions by the GRNA board, but the county owns the property. Maybe the Jabara property can follow the same route. John Conway suggested that the County should touch base with Friends of Cedar River, and see if they're interested in a Grass River-like system. Jerry Dobrzelewski suggested that since the Commission agrees that there should be trails, John C can take the matter to Parks Committee, then proceed from there.

John C. also brought up the issue of hunting on the Cedar River Natural Area. Hunting has been allowed in the past on the Jabara property, and should be kept that way. Mike Meriwether explained how hunting around the trails has been allowed in the Skaff property by removing "official" trails and demoting them to a system of "unofficial" trails. Al Pecar noted that restricting hunting around trails was one of the most contentious issues in the early years of the GRNA. Leaving most of GRNA open to hunting satisfied most people. Mike Meriwether thinks that the Skaff and Jabara properties should be combined, and ACD is most capable to deal with it at present. Trails issues can be dealt with through the Parks & Rec Commission, while hunting issues can be dealt with through ACD.

VIII. Economic Impact of Park Development

Howard briefed the Commission on the tools available through MSU for evaluating the economic impact of park and recreation facility development in any local area. Howard is in contact with the relevant faculty and staff of MSU with expertise in the area. MSU faculty will be happy to evaluate the results of Antrim County's application of such models, but Antrim County will be responsible for mastering and running the models. Howard will attempt to familiarize himself with the models.

IX. Antrim County Parks Bulletin/Flyer/Publication?

Al Pecar started the discussion on the concept of starting a publication of County parks assets. He proposed starting a database of the assets and their characteristics. He has performed for Mancelona Chamber of Commerce a visitor guide, which could also be a project for the County. Other means of disseminating information on recreational facilities would be press coverage and the county web site. Howard and Al briefed the Commission on possible computerized, kiosk- and web-based interactive mapping systems for Antrim Co. recreational and other facilities. Jerry Dobrzelewski instructed Howard to get costs for implementing such systems, for possible information for the Admin Committee and Planning Commission. Jerry Bash noted that we should get info to the right people. There is a need to determine how to collect data, determine output format, and get specialists to arrange the information. We need to get funding (Regional Chamber of Commerce, etc.). A booklet would be more expensive, but could be sold to cover cost. Jerry Dobrzelewski asked what the starting point would be for such an effort. Al replied that he would serve as the funnel for info; mail to Al Pecar at 1404 Doerr, Mancelona. Al noted that we need to dig up existing projects, then share with the public... need to ponder what brings folks back to Antrim County.

X. Other Matters

Eileen brought up the matter of road end closings. She stated that: the Parks & Rec Commission has always been in favor keeping road endings open (public access). She wondered whether the County Road Commission is closing roads too fast, in seeming contradiction of what the Parks & Rec Commission has always favored. Jerry Dobrzelewski noted that over the years, there have been many changes in the laws. A Twp can take over a road ending and, if not, the DNR can. Environmental issues are often the reason for the Road Commission's abandoning road endings. The cost of environmental compliance is often too prohibitive.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no communication or member comment, the meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

The next meeting will be on
Thursday, September 26, at 9 a.m.
at Room 203b, Antrim County Office Building

Antrim County
Parks and Recreation Commission
September 24, 2002

Minutes

Members Present: Jerome Dobrzelewski, Al Luurtsema, John Conway, Al Pecar, Mike Crawford
Members Absent: Mark Stone, Mike Meriwether, Jim Ferguson, and Pepper Bromelmeier
Staff Present: Howard Yamaguchi, Eileen Wallick
Others Present: Russ Blasdell

I. Call to Order

Jerome Dobrzelewski called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

II. Minutes of August 22, 2002 Meeting

Motion by John Conway, supported by Al Pecar, to accept the minutes of the Parks and Rec Commission meeting of August 22, 2002. Unanimous.

III. New Members

Howard briefed the Commission members on the fact that the Admin Committee required the advertisement of the vacant Parks & Rec Commission positions before filling the vacancies. Accordingly, an ad was placed in the *Antrim County News* and allied papers. Two letters of interest were returned, one from Jerry Basch and one from Russ Blasdell. Howard also informed the Parks & Rec Commission that Pepper Bromelmeier has resigned from active membership in the Commission, and that she requests that she be retained in an advisory capacity to the Commission. That leaves two openings in the Commission.

Motion by John Conway, supported by Al Luurtsema, to recommend to the County Admin Committee to appoint Russ Blasdell and Jerry Basch to the Antrim County Parks & Recreation Commission. Unanimous.

IV. Meeting Dates

Howard noted that Mark Stone cannot make the morning meetings, and that he requests the meetings be moved to the afternoon. The Commission was unanimous in their preference for morning meetings. Further discussion ensued on the meeting dates for the winter. The consensus was that the meetings be held in October, December, February, and April. From May through October, the meetings will be held monthly.

V. Antrim County Trails

Mark Randolph briefed the Parks & Rec Commission on the overall vision for a trail system in the County. Mark stated that starting in 1993, citizens gave their opinions on a trail system that they wanted that would connect villages to parks. Through the late 1990's, the Parks & Rec Commission kept the vision simmering on the back burner.

The County trail system would comprise two main routes. The western route would be a part of the Charlevoix- Bellaire – Alden – Williamsburg axis, with possible spurs to US 31. The eastern route would include snowmobile trails, and would be part of a Charlevoix – Gaylord – Traverse City system, and may extend from Bellaire to Wetzel Lake to the Lakes of the North. There are many opportunities using gas/oil/power line easements as well as railroad grades. Dual-use trails, with a paved portion and an unpaved portion, are also possible.

Unfortunately, the trails, especially paved trails, are very expensive. The cost for paving the TEA-21 grant trail is \$400,000. Of this, the grant pays for \$300,000 and the County must raise \$100,000. Next month MDOT will issue either a grant or a “commitment to fund.” If the County cannot resolve the right-of-way issue along the proposed trail, we might be able to work with MDOT to change the grant-funded section of the trail to another segment. In this regard, a “commitment to fund” would be more advantageous to the County as it would provide more time to resolve ROW issues.

Mark concluded the presentation by asking the Parks and Recreation Commission members to keep the overall vision of the trail system for the County in mind as we proceed with siting and planning for new parks.

VI. Wetzel Lake Project

There was no communication from Mancelona Township this past month.

VII. Elk Rapids Day Park

Howard reported that we are on the agenda for the Elk Rapids Village Planning Commission for their October 22 meeting. Because he lives in Elk Rapids, Howard volunteered to represent the Parks & Recreation Commission and brief the ER Village Planning Commission. Mike Crawford, Eileen Wallick, and Al Luurtsema also indicated that they would attend the meeting. Howard will send reminders to all prior to the meeting.

VIII. Cedar River Natural Area

Howard briefed the Commission on the Parks Committee discussion on management options for Cedar River Natural Area. Russ Blasdell, president of the Bellaire Conservation Club and president of the Friends of the Cedar River, informed the Parks & Rec Commission that the Conservation Club had met to discuss the possibility of managing the Cedar River Natural Area, and has entrusted Russ to work on the effort. The Friends of The Cedar River has not yet met to discuss this issue, but is expected to do so in October. Russ feels that between the Conservation Club and the Friends, there is enough manpower to form a core group that guide the management of the area. Russ stated that the consensus of both groups to date is to leave area as natural as possible, ensuring hunting, fishing and trapping access to all.

John Conway suggested that the Friends/Conservation Club attend Grass River Natural Area board meetings to glean organizational, management, and project ideas and options from the experience that Grass River has accumulated over the years. Jerry Dobrzelewski opined that letting local groups, suitably organized, to manage the area would be preferable to direct government management.

Motion by John Conway, supported by Al Luurtsema, to recommend to the County Parks Committee that the Friends of the Cedar River and the Bellaire Conservation Club, organized using the Grass River Natural Area model or equivalent, be appointed to plan for and manage the Cedar River Natural Area. Unanimous.

IX. Bellaire Golf Club Update

Mike Crawford handed out a map of the Bellaire Golf Club property currently under consideration by the County for possible acquisition. He also handed out a set of bullets outlining the various recreational and commercial possibilities to County residents inherent in such an acquisition.

Mike briefed the Commission on efforts to date. With apparent support of most folks he had polled on the matter, he approached the County Finance Committee to request funding for acquisition of the golf club, and to add the funds to the Parks Committee budget. Mike explained that Alden Bank's asking price is \$1.5 million, but that they would probably give the County a price break should the County be serious. The Finance Committee requested that Mike provide them with a business plan (at no cost to the County) for the proposed project.

Discussion ensued on the merits of private versus public ownership of the course, the opportunities for the public, the schools and other organizations to use the facilities at affordable rates, and the possibility of using management interns from M-Tech and from downstate universities with golf course management curricula. It was emphasized that a permanent manager would still be needed to provide overall management of the facility.

Mike suggested that the Parks & Recreation Commission request Northern Lakes Economic Alliance (NLEA) to perform the study. Howard was instructed to contact NLEA and set up a meeting, before the next Parks & Rec meeting, involving NLEA, Howard, Jim Ferguson, Al Luurtsema, and Jerry Dobrzelewski.

X. Antrim County Parks Bulletin/Flyer/Publication

Al Pecar stated that he was unable to spend much time during the past month on the publication/flyer/database as he was tapped by the Mancelona School Board to work on an urgent teaching program development project. He informed the Commission that he felt that the database should be as complete as possible in listing the resources, not limited to parks and recreation-related data. He would like to make available in print and in the website a list of restaurants, recreational facilities, businesses, and other area features. He will work with Howard on the design of the database.

XI. Other Matters

Eileen stated, for the record, that this was a good meeting. ☺

She also brought up several matters. She noted that the county might consider talking to the landowners adjacent to Barnes Park to bequeath their properties (especially the three lots that total 10-acres) in an estate planning arrangement (remainder trusts, etc.) with the County. Many examples of such agreements are on the public record.

In response to a question on Barnes Park's 2002 season, she briefed the Commission on the ongoing bathhouse construction. She also noted that while attendance was down somewhat compared to last year, revenues were higher because higher rates were instituted for non-residents of the County. She is also obtaining quotes for the repair of the A-frame roof support beam at the ER Day Park pavilion. The electrical system will be repaired in due time. Jerry Dobrzelewski noted that he had heard very good reviews of Barnes Park, with two exceptions: one was a query on why non-resident landowners do not receive a discount for Barnes Park, and the other was that there is no barrier-free access to the beach.

Jerry Dobrzelewski offered some clarification on the temporary closure by the Road Commission of a portion of the Stover Pond Road.

XII. Adjournment

Motion by John Conway, supported by Al Luurtsema, to adjourn the meeting (11 a.m.). Unanimous

**The next meeting will be on
Thursday, October 24, at 9 a.m.
at Room 203b, Antrim County Office Building**

Antrim County
Parks and Recreation Commission
October 24, 2002

Minutes

Members Present: Jerome Dobrzelewski, Mike Crawford, Al Luurtsema, Al Pecar, Mike Meriwether, Jim Ferguson, Jerry Basch and Russ Blasdell
Members Absent: Mark Stone, John Conway, and Stan Moore
Staff Present: Howard Yamaguchi, Eileen Wallick
Others Present: Jack White

I. Call to Order

Jerome Dobrzelewski called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

II. Minutes of September 24, 2002 Meeting

Jerome Dobrzelewski requested a correction of the minutes to read “temporary closure” of portions of the Stover Pond Road instead of “abandonment.” He then clarified the closure situation to the Commission. **Minutes accepted with changes incorporated.**

III. New Members

The Chairman formally welcomed Jerry Basch and Russ Blasdell to the Antrim County Parks and Recreation Commission.

IV. Wetzel Lake Project

Howard distributed copies of the e-mail from Maurice McGleish, Mancelona Township clerk. Mr. McGleish informed the Commission that a committee of two was appointed by the Township to work with County Parks & Rec to come up with some recommendations for both sides. The committee is composed of Mr. McGleish and Margaret Chapman, the previous township clerk and quite knowledgeable of the area.

The chair instructed Howard to communicate with Mr. McGleish and obtain a formal response from the Township to our previous proposals so that talks and planning could proceed.

V. Elk Rapids Day Park

Al Luurtsema updated the Commission on his Day Park planning presentation, representing the Parks & Rec Commission, at the Elk Rapids Village planning commission. There was a very enthusiastic response from the planning commission members as well as the people attending the meeting. We anticipate being contacted by them about who will participate in the preliminary discussions that will lead to a Rotary Charities grant application in late Winter. The same presentation will be held at the next Elk Rapids Township planning commission meeting.

Jim Ferguson related his chance encounter in Elk Rapids with Ray Krumlauf, who once worked on the Parks staff with Eileen Wallick. Mr. Krumlauf expressed interest in maintaining the Day Park as a volunteer resident manager. Jim then circulated a letter from Mr. Krumlauf, complete with suggestions for ER Day Park improvements, to the Commission. Jack White noted that resident volunteers frequently staff parks in other states, and that this may be a possibility for future park staffing patterns in the County. Howard was instructed to send him a thank you letter, and keep his contact data on file.

VI. Cedar River Natural Area

Mike Meriwether informed the Parks & Rec Commission that the County Board of Commissioners voted to roll the Jabara property into County forest system, thereby placing the Cedar River Natural Area (CRNA) under the management of the Conservation District, under the oversight of the County Lands Agriculture and Forestry Committee. Mike will work closely with Russ Blasdell and the Friends of Cedar River to design a trail system and other minimal infrastructure systems, and possibly use prison crews to get trails cut.

Discussion ensued on the status of the Skaff property portion of the CRNA. The Nature Conservancy has agreed to pay back \$75,000 to the Board of Commissioners by December for a conservation easement on the Skaff property.

VII. Bellaire Golf Club Update

Mike Crawford gave the update: Tom Johnson and Gary Walker of the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance (NLEA) met with some Parks & Rec Commission members to discuss the proposed preliminary business plan/feasibility study for the golf course. Gary Walker, the small business consultant at NLEA, will perform the study by collecting data and talking to various folks. We will obtain a report on November 12.

Jim Ferguson explained the rationale for putting together a biz plan: to obtain a preliminary reading on the feasibility of the proposal. He explained the need to maintain affordable golfing facilities in the County. Jerome Dobrzelewski related his reservations about the project: too many contingencies, not the county's usual operation, etc. Jack White questioned whether taxpayers would consider this a good use of county funds, with possible consequences on elected officials. Mike Crawford explained that the general idea is to acquire as much common ground for public, even if it may be a golf course. Jerry suggested that the study consult Bob Ricksgers to gauge the impact of taking the property off the Custer Township tax rolls.

Extensive discussion ensued on the county's possible role in the golf club. New commission member Jerry Basch asked why the County, which owns and operates public lands, was considering purchasing a commercial property. He also noted the existence of many municipal golf courses, with operations farmed out to professional managers. He requested some clarification on our operating philosophy. Mike Crawford noted that there is a "Recreation" component in Parks & Recreation, and that this would make low-cost golf available to the public, to schools, and to civic groups. Some discussion ensued on benefits of exposing school-age children early to various sports.

VIII. Antrim County Parks Bulletin/Flyer/Publication

Allen Pecar briefed the Parks & Rec Commission on his work to date in designing a database that could be based at the County office and could be used as the information source for county staff, county and other websites, and for any brochures and publications that the county wishes to publish. Originally designed for public parks and recreational facilities, Allen is extending the database to include more data categories such as private campsites, lodgings, cinemas, food services, groceries, sports facilities, local businesses, and other commonly requested information.

Allen now proposes to solicit data from the public to populate the database. He requested that the Parks & Rec Commission bring this matter up for the Board of Commissioners to approve our going to the public for data input. There are already some older databases whose contents need to be updated and incorporated into our database.

Jerry Dobrzelewski instructed Allen and Howard to design an appropriate questionnaire for transmittal to the various townships and other bodies to solicit information, cooperating with the Chambers of Commerce as appropriate.

Howard asked whether the Parks Committee needs to make a formal motion to the Board of Commissioners upon recommendation by the Parks & Rec Commission. Mike Crawford and Jack White agreed that the matter should be brought up by Pete Garwood in his regular slot at the next monthly Commissioners meeting.

Al Luurtsema emphasized that while a computer database is a good tool, what we need most immediately are information brochures that the public could readily access at gas stations, rest stops, and other frequented spots during the summer tourist season. Jack White noted that both are probably necessary.

Jack White also noted that Parks & Rec should cooperate with the County Road Commission, as information on the county's facilities could be placed to supplement or replace the write-up that is currently on the county road map. Jack noted that the county road map is up for reprint as stocks are running low, and now would be the time to work with the Road Commission and the County Clerk for a re-design of the county blurb side of the map. Howard was instructed by the Chairman to commence work on this. Howard noted that Al Pecar is the author of the current County blurb on the road map.

IX. Old Business

Howard noted that Parks & Rec decided at the last meeting that we would meet every other month after this meeting. The next meeting, however, falls on December 26. The next meeting was rescheduled for Thursday, December 19.

X. New Business

Howard briefed the Parks & Rec Commission about the decision by the Board of Commissioners to study the best way to allow the Bellaire Rotary Club and the Little League to use the decommissioned Meadow Brook Facility sewage lagoon. The Little League wishes to use the land for baseball games, and the Rotary Club proposes to raise funds for the construction of a Little League field. The Parks Committee will tackle the matter.

XI. Member Comment

Mike Meriwether asked the group what the philosophy of this commission was: are we trying to bring people to Antrim County, or are we trying to offer recreational information to local taxpayers? What are we trying to do when we are planning for databases and brochures? These are two different goals.

Jim Ferguson pointed out that our mission statement and such are in the county's Comprehensive Recreation Plan. (Howard will make copies to the four Parks & Rec Commission members who do not have copies.) Jerry Basch noted that there is a danger in duplicating the efforts of the Chambers of Commerce. We should be servicing the taxpayers primarily, while assisting and working as a team with Chambers. Jerry D. noted that brochures are not necessarily specific to taxpayers or tourists in particular.

XII. Adjournment

Motion by Al Luurtsema, supported by Mike Crawford, to adjourn the meeting (11 a.m.). Unanimous.

**The next meeting will be on
Thursday, December 19, at 9 a.m.
at Room 203b, Antrim County Office Building**

Antrim County
Parks and Recreation Commission
October 24, 2002

Minutes

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Howard distributed copies of the e-mail from Maurice McGleish, Mancelona Township clerk. Mr. McGleish informed the Commission that a committee of two was appointed by the Township to work with County Parks & Rec to come up with some recommendations for both sides. The committee is composed of Mr. McGleish and Margaret Chapman, the previous township clerk and quite knowledgeable of the area.

The chair instructed Howard to communicate with Mr. McGleish and obtain a formal response from the Township to our previous proposals so that talks and planning could proceed.

V. Elk Rapids Day Park

Al Luurtsema updated the Commission on his Day Park planning presentation, representing the Parks & Rec Commission, at the Elk Rapids Village planning commission. There was a very enthusiastic response from the planning commission members as well as the people attending the meeting. We anticipate being contacted by them about who will participate in the preliminary discussions that will lead to a Rotary Charities grant application in late Winter. The same presentation will be held at the next Elk Rapids Township planning commission meeting.

Jim Ferguson related his chance encounter in Elk Rapids with Ray Krumlauf, who once worked on the Parks staff with Eileen Wallick. Mr. Krumlauf expressed interest in maintaining the Day Park as a volunteer resident manager. Jim then circulated a letter from Mr. Krumlauf, complete with suggestions for ER Day Park improvements, to the Commission. Jack White noted that resident volunteers frequently staff parks in other states, and that this may be a possibility for future park staffing patterns in the County. Howard was instructed to send him a thank you letter, and keep his contact data on file.

VI. Cedar River Natural Area

Mike Meriwether informed the Parks & Rec Commission that the County Board of Commissioners voted to roll the Jabara property into County forest system, thereby placing the Cedar River Natural Area (CRNA) under the management of the Conservation District, under the oversight of the County Lands Agriculture and Forestry Committee. Mike will work closely with Russ Blasdell and the Friends of Cedar River to design a trail system and other minimal infrastructure systems, and possibly use prison crews to get trails cut.

Discussion ensued on the status of the Skaff property portion of the CRNA. The Nature Conservancy has agreed to pay back \$75,000 to the Board of Commissioners by December for a conservation easement on the Skaff property.

VII. Bellaire Golf Club Update

Mike Crawford gave the update: Tom Johnson and Gary Walker of the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance (NLEA) met with some Parks & Rec Commission members to discuss the proposed preliminary business plan/feasibility study for the golf course. Gary Walker, the small business consultant at NLEA, will perform the study by collecting data and talking to various folks. We will obtain a report on November 12.

Jim Ferguson explained the rationale for putting together a biz plan: to obtain a preliminary reading on the feasibility of the proposal. He explained the need to maintain affordable golfing facilities in the County. Jerome Dobrzelewski related his reservations about the project: too many contingencies, not the county's usual operation, etc. Jack White questioned whether taxpayers would consider this a good use of county funds, with possible consequences on elected officials. Mike Crawford explained that the general idea is to acquire as much common ground for public, even if it may be a golf course. Jerry suggested that the study consult Bob Ricksgers to gauge the impact of taking the property off the Custer Township tax rolls.

Extensive discussion ensued on the county's possible role in the golf club. New commission member Jerry Basch asked why the County, which owns and operates public lands, was considering purchasing a commercial property. He also noted the existence of many municipal golf courses, with operations farmed out to professional managers. He requested some clarification on our operating philosophy. Mike Crawford noted that there is a "Recreation" component in Parks & Recreation, and that this would make low-cost golf available to the public, to schools, and to civic groups. Some discussion ensued on benefits of exposing school-age children early to various sports.

VIII. Antrim County Parks Bulletin/Flyer/Publication

Allen Pecar briefed the Parks & Rec Commission on his work to date in designing a database that could be based at the County office and could be used as the information source for county staff, county and other websites, and for any brochures and publications that the county wishes to publish. Originally designed for public parks and recreational facilities, Allen is extending the database to include more data categories such as private campsites, lodgings, cinemas, food services, groceries, sports facilities, local businesses, and other commonly requested information.

Allen now proposes to solicit data from the public to populate the database. He requested that the Parks & Rec Commission bring this matter up for the Board of Commissioners to approve our going to the public for data input. There are already some older databases whose contents need to be updated and incorporated into our database.

Jerry Dobrzelewski instructed Allen and Howard to design an appropriate questionnaire for transmittal to the various townships and other bodies to solicit information, cooperating with the Chambers of Commerce as appropriate.

Howard asked whether the Parks Committee needs to make a formal motion to the Board of Commissioners upon recommendation by the Parks & Rec Commission. Mike Crawford and Jack White agreed that the matter should be brought up by Pete Garwood in his regular slot at the next monthly Commissioners meeting.

Al Luurtsema emphasized that while a computer database is a good tool, what we need most immediately are information brochures that the public could readily access at gas stations, rest stops, and other frequented spots during the summer tourist season. Jack White noted that both are probably necessary.

Jack White also noted that Parks & Rec should cooperate with the County Road Commission, as information on the county's facilities could be placed to supplement or replace the write-up that is currently on the county road map. Jack noted that the county road map is up for reprint as stocks are running low, and now would be the time to work with the Road Commission and the County Clerk for a re-design of the county blurb side of the map. Howard was instructed by the Chairman to commence work on this. Howard noted that Al Pecar is the author of the current County blurb on the road map.

IX. Old Business

Howard noted that Parks & Rec decided at the last meeting that we would meet every other month after this meeting. The next meeting, however, falls on December 26. The next meeting was rescheduled for Thursday, December 19.

X. New Business

Howard briefed the Parks & Rec Commission about the decision by the Board of Commissioners to study the best way to allow the Bellaire Rotary Club and the Little League to use the decommissioned Meadow Brook Facility sewage lagoon. The Little League wishes to use the land for baseball games, and the Rotary Club proposes to raise funds for the construction of a Little League field. The Parks Committee will tackle the matter.

XI. Member Comment

Mike Meriwether asked the group what the philosophy of this commission was: are we trying to bring people to Antrim County, or are we trying to offer recreational information to local taxpayers? What are we trying to do when we are planning for databases and brochures? These are two different goals.

Jim Ferguson pointed out that our mission statement and such are in the county's Comprehensive Recreation Plan. (Howard will make copies to the four Parks & Rec Commission members who do not have copies.) Jerry Basch noted that there is a danger in duplicating the efforts of the Chambers of Commerce. We should be servicing the taxpayers primarily, while assisting and working as a team with Chambers. Jerry D. noted that brochures are not necessarily specific to taxpayers or tourists in particular.

XII. Adjournment

Motion by Al Luurtsema, supported by Mike Crawford, to adjourn the meeting (11 a.m.). Unanimous.

**The next meeting will be on
Thursday, December 19, at 9 a.m.
at Room 203b, Antrim County Office Building**

Antrim County
Parks and Recreation Commission
December 19, 2002

Minutes

Members Present: Jerome Dobrzelewski, Mike Crawford, Al Luurtsema, Al Pecar, Mike Meriwether, Jim Ferguson, Jerry Basch and Russ Blasdell
Members Absent: Mark Stone, John Conway, and Stan Moore
Staff Present: Howard Yamaguchi and Eileen Wallick
Others Present: Pat Dixon and Bob Peterson (Village of Elk Rapids)

I. Call to Order

Jerome Dobrzelewski called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

II. Minutes of October 24, 2002 Meeting

Motion by Mike Crawford, supported by Al Luurtsema, to accept the Minutes of the October 24, 2002 meeting. Unanimous.

III. Elk Rapids Day Park

Al Luurtsema briefed the Commission on the first planning meeting held at Elk Rapids for the Day Park, involving participants from the Village and Township. He then called on Pat Dixon of the Elk Rapids Village Parks and Recreation Commission. Pat informed the Commission on the opportunities presented by the Boundless Playground grant. Application deadline is March 7, 2003. Janet Person then provided the Commission with details of the requirements of the grant. She also noted that other planning grant opportunities include Rotary Charities and Coastal Zone grants. For planning and dev - DNR is always interested in recreation; Kellog/Mott grants are possible, but difficult to win; Chambers of Commerce may be another funding source. Mike Crawford noted that the Boundless Playground opportunity is such that the Board of Commissioners cannot react the time required. He also noted that perhaps the Commission should return to the original vision of for the Day Park.

Discussion then centered on the various concerns brought up by the Day Park subcommittee at the Elk Rapids meeting: security (Jerry Basch), undesirability of camping (Al Luurtsema), mothers with small children feeling unsafe because of long distances of limited visibility from points of ingress/egress (Pat Dixon), special-use camping versus general camping (Mike Meriwether), etc. Bob Peterson suggested developing site plans based on ideas brought up to date, possibly phasing development of the site. Al Pecar suggested a financing plan for the various aspects of capital improvements and O&M. Mike Meriwether emphasized the need for a saleable plan, attach dollar signs to the plan items, and proceed from there.

Jerry Dobrzelewski wrapped up the discussion by instructing the subcommittee to continue their work, incorporating elements of the Yuchasz plan/concerns, Mike Meriwether plans, and address various security and camping concerns in the plan.

IV. Wetzel Lake Project

Howard reported that there were no formal responses from the Township this month. Al Pecar reported on conversations with Maurice McGleish and Margaret Chapman, who are the Township counterparts to the County's planning team. The township is waiting for something more specific from the County. We need to decide on more things (what the County wants to commit in terms of funding) before we can get more specific. The Sand Lakes proposal some years ago fell apart because there was no County commitment to security, etc. Jim Ferguson and Al Pecar need to meet and start the planning process with the Township representatives.

Jim Ferguson reiterated the need for a permanent source of funding for parks and recreational activities, as well as for conservation. Alan Pecar stressed that the Board of Commissioners need to see the importance of these activities, quantified in terms of statistics on tourist dollars, etc. This information would then need to be coupled with a vision of how the funds would be used.

V. Cedar River Natural Area

Mike Meriwether gave the briefing on Cedar River. The area is now being managed by the Antrim Conservation District as part of the forest lands of the County. Preliminary sketches on proposed trails facilities have been made, and discussions are planned with the Friends of The Cedar River. Mike showed sketches and aerial photography of the area. He has already prepared a resource management plan for the Skaff parcel. CRNA comprises the Skaff and Jabara properties for management purposes. The process is under County Lands Agriculture and Forestry (CLAF) Committee oversight. CLAF has budget for forestry to implement projects. Proposed are trails in the CRNA, including one boardwalk, two bridges that need to be worked on, and a parking lot. Prison crew will cut trails. No primitive or other camping allowed, but users can park on Craven Park to which trails lead. The chairman commended Mike Meriwether's efforts.

VI. Bellaire Golf Club Update

Mike Crawford informed the Commission that Gary Walker of the NLEA will be presenting his findings on January 3 to the ad-hoc subcommittee.

VII. Antrim County Parks Bulletin/Flyer/Publication

Allen Pecar briefed the Parks & Rec Commission that he was acquiring Microsoft Access skills, and that he hoped to have determined the database structure by the next meeting.

VIII. Vision Statement

Jerry Basch noted the need for a coherent vision statement for the Parks & Recreation Commission. All members are to bring in a snippet of the statement for next meeting..

IX. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.

The next meeting will be on
Thursday, February 27, at 9 a.m.
at Room 203b, Antrim County Office Building