

Antrim Creek Natural Area Commission

Bernie Blackmore, Chairman

Betty Hoffmann

Carl Veenstra

Jacob Veenstra

Vacancy

May 14, 2014

Minutes

Members Present: Bernie Blackmore, Betty Hoffmann, Carl Veenstra, and Jacob Veenstra

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Eileen Wallick, Gary Dawson, Gene Dawson, Pete Garwood, James Dake, Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Briggs, and Janet Koch

1. Call to Order

By general consensus, it was agreed that Bernie Blackmore, Antrim County Commissioner, would preside as chairman for the Antrim Creek Natural Area (ACNA) meetings. Mr. Blackmore called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Review of May and October 2013 Minutes

Motion by Betty Hoffmann, seconded by Carl Veenstra, to accept the May 2013 minutes as presented. Motion carried – unanimous.

Betty Hoffman noted that item number 9 from the October 9, 2013 minutes should have an addition stating that “Betty Hoffman had been directed to contact Chuck Cleland.”

Motion by Jake Veenstra, seconded by Carl Veenstra, to accept the October 2013 minutes as corrected. Motion carried – unanimous.

4. Education Programs for 2014

James Dake, Education Director for Grass River Natural Area (GRNA), talked about the three educational programs he would like to hold at the ACNA this summer. Each program would cost \$150 for a total cost of \$450. The following programs would take place on Saturday mornings at 10:00 a.m. and would be conducted by Arlene Westhoven, GRNA Naturalist:

- Shifting Sands - June 21
- Ecology of Dune Plants - July 12
- Humans and the ACNA - August 23

Carl Veenstra asked Mr. Dake how the programs would be evaluated. Mr. Dake said program attendees would be given participant surveys to complete. He agreed to appear at the fall ACNA meeting to discuss the success of the summer’s programming. The portion of the October minutes that discussed the 2013 educational programming was reviewed.

Motion by Jake Veenstra, seconded by Betty Hoffmann, to approve the GRNA education proposal. Motion carried – unanimous.

5. Gravel

The ACNA Commission discussed the confusion regarding the Antrim County Road Commission's responsibilities for the road maintenance at the ACNA. At the October meeting, the Commission agreed to a proposal from then-Commission member Jerroll Drenth, to distribute three loads of gravel each year for three years, between the two entrances. The condition of the north road was also discussed. Gene Dawson, Antrim County Commissioner, and Janet Koch, Associate Planner, spoke about the washout at the west end of the north road.

Ms. Koch was asked to clarify the extent of the Road Commission's maintenance responsibilities. Ms. Koch will work with Eileen Wallick, Parks Manager, Heidi Shaffer, Antrim County Soil Erosion Control Officer, and the Road Commission, and will report back to the ACNA Commission.

6. Snowplowing Review – 2013-14

Ms. Koch said the snowplowing had cost slightly more than the \$400 anticipated when the Commission had agreed in October 2013 to plow the south entrance only when there was 4" or more of snow. Carl Veenstra said people had taken advantage of the season's snowplowing and had visited the ACNA throughout the winter months.

Carl Veenstra said the original suggestion for providing winter access to the ACNA had been to widen Dixie Highway near the entrances and have the widened area plowed.

Ms. Koch said she would bring snowplowing quotes for the 2014-15 winter season to the fall meeting.

7. Archeological Dig

Betty Hoffmann told the Commission that Chuck Cleland had said he'll try and get someone next summer to do an excavation of the Orr house at the ACNA. Carl Veenstra asked the purpose of that type of dig. Ms. Hoffmann said its purpose would be exploration and recovery of artifacts from the first home in Antrim City, in addition to the eventual placement of historical markers for educational purposes.

8. EarthCache

Mr. Stanley Briggs described the concepts of geocaching and earthcaching. He said that geocaching involves a physical cache and a log book. The purpose of an EarthCache, however, is education about geological and geographical features. There would be nothing placed at the park and all the information would be online. Mr. Briggs told the Commission that his EarthCache would direct people to locate the different historical levels of Lake Michigan. Mr. Briggs also said he didn't foresee any impact to the ACNA other than perhaps a few more visitors. Visitors to the EarthCache are not to leave anything or take anything. Mr. Briggs said he could provide feedback regarding the number of visitors at the ACNA fall meeting.

Carl Veenstra said there had been an unofficial type of geocache at ACNA. He added that the EarthCache sounded like a much better application for ACNA.

Motion by Carl Veenstra, seconded by Betty Hoffman, recommending that the Antrim County Board of Commissioners approve Stanley Briggs' proposal for an EarthCache at ACNA. Motion carried – unanimous.

9. Civil Fee Review

Pete Garwood, County Administrator, said the Antrim County Finance Committee had requested that the Commission review the civil fines associated with ACNA.

Bernie Blackmore asked who enforced the ordinance. Mr. Garwood reviewed the ordinance and said enforcement would be by the Sheriff's Department or the State Police. Mr. Blackmore asked if anyone had ever been fined. Mr. Garwood said not to his knowledge, but people had called with questions about what was permitted at ACNA. The Commission saw no need to revise the civil fees and the Commission took no action.

Carl Veenstra described removal of pieces from a shipwreck from the waters of Lake Michigan through the ACNA property and asked if prohibition of such a situation could be included in the ordinance.

10. Vegetation Growth on Creek

The Commission reviewed the photos of Antrim Creek dated August 29, 2013 provided by Karen & Steve Jones. After a discussion of the growth along the creek, the Commission felt that, considering the wetlands issues, there wasn't much that could be done. The Commission noted that if the Jones's were willing to discuss the issue further, that they would be welcome to attend the next ACNA meeting.

Ms. Koch was requested to send a letter to the Jones's communicating the Commission's decision.

Note: the day after the meeting, Ms. Hoffmann contacted Ms. Koch, saying that it might be beneficial to contact the AuSable Institute regarding the removal of any exotic plants from the creek.

11. Rock Purchase

With reference to a letter requesting the purchase of a rock from the ACNA, Ms. Hoffmann read the ACNA's mission statement; "To manage the site as a natural area, to protect the diversity and fragile natural features found on the property and keep it accessible for recreational and educational use by the public."

Motion by Betty Hoffmann, seconded by Carl Veenstra, to have Ms. Koch send a letter denying the request for purchase of a rock from the ACNA. Motion carried – unanimous.

12. Various Matters

Metal Detector Policy

Ms. Koch said she'd found hand-written notes regarding a change to the current policy on metal detectors. It was agreed that she'd type the notes into proposed policy form for review at the next ACNA meeting.

Boat Launch

Gene Dawson mentioned that the ACNA could be a "Harbor of Refuge" site for Lake Michigan boaters. Carl Veenstra said a true harbor of refuge could change the ACNA significantly. He added that additional parking isn't readily available and that the harbor of refuge would require accommodating larger boats. There was a short discussion of grant possibilities and other potential boat launch locations.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Antrim Creek Natural Area Commission

Bernie Blackmore, Chairman

Betty Hoffmann

Michele Nerone

Carl Veenstra

Jacob Veenstra

October 22, 2014 Minutes

Members Present: Betty Hoffmann, Michele Nerone, Carl Veenstra, and Jacob Veenstra

Members Absent: Bernie Blackmore

Others Present: Gene Dawson, James Dake, and Janet Koch

1. Call to Order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Review of May 14, 2014 Minutes

As the Commission members did not receive copies of the minutes in their packets, the May minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting.

4. Antrim Creek Natural Area (ACNA) Website

Janet Koch, Associate Planner, told the Commission that the Antrim County website was being redesigned. The current ACNA webpages were designed by a class from Ellsworth High School a number of years ago, but has not been updated on a regular basis. The Commission members said the teacher who'd been in charge of the project had left the school and that the students who'd worked on the project had all graduated some time ago.

It was the Commission's consensus to move the ACNA website's content into the framework of the redesigned County website. Ms. Koch said she'd report back on the number of visitors to the ACNA webpages.

5. 2014 Grass River Natural Area (GRNA) Educational Program Results

James Dake, Education Director for GRNA, distributed copies of an evaluation of the three programs held at ACNA last summer. The following programs took place on Saturday mornings at 10:00 a.m. and were conducted by Arlene Westhoven, GRNA Naturalist.

- Shifting Sands - June 21 (attended by 11 people)
- Ecology of Dune Plants – July 12 (attended by 1 person)
- Humans and the ACNA - August 23 (attend by 30 people)

The poor attendance at the dune plants program could have been due to the subject matter or the day's poor weather. GRNA is considering holding future educational events in July and August.

Carl Veenstra asked that Commission members be notified of all events. Ms. Koch said she would provide Mr. Dake with their contact information; Mr. Dake said he would add it to the distribution list.

Mr. Dake asked for programming suggestions. Gene Dawson, Antrim County Commissioner, suggested having a tribal member speak. Mr. C. Veenstra said history is a very popular topic and a historical presentation should be offered every year.

Mr. Dake hoped to get 2015 programming approval from the Commission in April to ensure that the information can be included in their summer mailing. The next ACNA Commission meeting was scheduled for April 15, 2015. However, it was noted that if there is a need for an earlier meeting, that it will also be scheduled.

6. Snowplowing for 2014-15

The Commission agreed that plowing the south entrance during the upcoming winter would be a benefit to park users. Ms. Koch said she'd contacted Boss Lawn & Landscaping and he quoted the same price as the previous winter at \$25 per plow, plowing when there was 4" – 6" of snowfall. She added that she'd contacted other vendors but had not yet received any other quotes.

Motion by Carl Veenstra, seconded by Betty Hoffmann, to recommend that the Board of Commissioners approve that Boss Land & Landscaping plow the south entrance road at Antrim Creek Natural Area at a cost of \$25 per plow at 4" – 6" of snow unless another quote is received that is lower. Motion carried – unanimous.

7. Metal Detector Policy

The Commission discussed the proposed changes to the existing Metal Detector Policy (see attached). Mr. C. Veenstra pointed out that the last paragraph could be difficult to enforce.

Ms. Hoffmann noted that phrases "will be granted" in sections a) and b) should be changed to "may be granted" to be consistent with the second paragraph.

Ms. Koch said she would ensure the correctness of the section number in the first paragraph.

Motion by Carl Veenstra, seconded by Jacob Veenstra, to recommend that the Board of Commissioners approve the changes to the Antrim Creek Natural Area Metal Detector Policy. Motion carried – unanimous.

8. 2015 Budget

There was a discussion of the gravel and culvert situation at the bottom of the hill near the boat launching area. The Commission agreed that some work at the location might be necessary in 2015.

9. Earth Cache Project Results

Ms. Koch told the Commission that Stan Briggs had reported that the Earth Cache he'd received permission to set up for ACNA had been approved by the Geological Society of America and published online in late August. He reported that one group had used the Earth Cache in mid-September and that he expected more next summer.

Ms. Koch said she would locate the Earth Cache content that Mr. Briggs had developed for ACNA and bring it back to the Commission.

10. Various Matters

Ms. Koch said she had been directed by the Board of Commissioners to talk to the Army Corps of Engineers and the Antrim Conservation District about possibilities for small improvements to the boat ramp. She said no decisions have been made and no funds allocated for any projects; that she would be fact-finding. She will report back to the Commission with her findings.

Mr. C. Veenstra said he hoped the Board of Commissioners would continue to respect the wishes of the ACNA Commission. The Commission noted the many permitting issues regarding any improvements in the boat ramp area.

Mr. C. Veenstra said 2015 might be a good time to approach the owner of the schoolhouse property, or the owner's representative, about acquisition.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

DRAFT