

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION *Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee (MSPAC)*

February 13, 2014
MSU Diagnostic Center

PRESENT FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Commissioner Louise Klarr, Chair
Commissioner Tim Nichols, Co-Chair
Commissioner Vicki Pontz, Co-Chair

PRESENT FOR THE MSPAC

Tom Bailey
Julie Clark
Ann Conklin
Brad Garmon, for Chris Graham
Jefferson Gray, via Conference Call
Jim Hendricks
Bob Hoffmeyer, via Conference Call
Mike McDonald
Mary Pitcher
Amy Trotter

ABSENT

Jim Bradley
Tom Ferguson
Mike Foote

OTHERS PRESENT

Don Frederick - Graymont
Al and Kathy English –Graymont
Tom Warschersky – Graymont
Aubrey Golden - Graymont
Lynne Boyd, retired DNR Chief of Forestry
Al DeClerq, Saginaw Field & Streams
Other DNR Management and Staff

MICHIGAN STATE PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSPAC)

INTRODUCTIONS

Commissioner Nichols called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Nichols announced that he will no longer be Chair of the MSPAC as he will be chairing a new NRC committee on Youth Education. He thanked the MSPAC for their support and the work they accomplished while he was Chair, and then passed the baton to Commissioner Klarr who will now Chair the MSPAC.

Commissioner Klarr introduced herself and gave some background on herself and her interests. She commented that the greatest thing about working with the DNR is the partnerships that go on throughout the department. She then acknowledged that the Parks and Recreation Division is flushed with partnerships and commented that a better parks system leads to sustainability within state parks.

She then acknowledged the residents and the distance they drove from the Upper Peninsula to be present for the Graymont presentation.

Commissioner Klarr introduced the newest member to the MSPAC, Commissioner Vicki Pontz, who replaced former Commissioner Annoesjka Steinman.

Commissioner Klarr then took roll call, made introductions around the room and asked if there were any additions or adjustments to the agenda. No adjustments to the agenda were offered.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Klarr asked if anyone from the general public would like to address the committee at this time. No comments were offered but Klarr offered the residents from the Upper Peninsula the opportunity to address the committee during the Graymont presentation.

APPROVE MINUTES

Commissioner Klarr asked if the committee had any edits, changes or discussion regarding the draft Minutes from the November 7 and December 12, 2013 meetings. No comments or edits were offered.

Pitcher motioned to approve the Minutes; McDonald seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried and the November 7 and December 12, 2013 Minutes were approved.

BELLE ISLE UPDATE

DNR Parks and Recreation Chief Ron Olson reminded the committee that an "All in For Belle Isle" event was held on December 10, 2013 to show support for Belle Isle. February 10, 2014 marked the beginning of a 30 year lease with the City of Detroit to manage Belle Isle as a state park.

Olson reported on activities that have been taking place on the island, to include the removal of hazardous trees, replacing picnic table tops, cleaning restrooms, and other general maintenance to show that we are going to start down the road to improving Belle Isle. He also reported that the Michigan State Police and DNR Law Enforcement have been patrolling the island and are now enforcing the rules and laws on the island. Comments have been made from the locals that they are pleased to see law enforcement in the area.

Olson further reported that they are in the process of hiring staff for Belle Isle. He introduced Scott Pratt, the Chief of Southern Michigan Field Operations. Pratt is working closely with the acting Metro Detroit District Supervisor, Mike Terrell, in coordinating efforts, events, policies and procedures for the island and conducting interviews to get staff hired. In the interim, staff from the William G. Milliken State Park and Harbor is assisting with the island until it is fully staffed.

Olson announced that the members of the newly created Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee (BIPAC) were appointed by Governor Rick Snyder and they held their first meeting in January. Michele Hodges with the Belle Isle Conservancy is the Chair, and a web site has been developed to keep the general public up-to-date as things develop with the island. The web site is www.belleislepark.org and is updated as things progress. It also houses information about the BIPAC's members and meetings. Olson encouraged committee members to attend meetings as their schedules allow.

Olson further reported that the next step is to address basic operations and establish rules for the island. The City of Detroit's rules will be adopted and maintained at this time, but will be further evaluated by the BIPAC at a future meeting. The rules, policies and procedures will remain the same for the first year as they relate to pavilion reservations, events, and fees but state park rules will be incorporated and enforced.

The island has been receiving a lot of media attention. The Detroit Free Press often covers stories on the island, as does Channels 4, 7 or Fox TV in Detroit. Olson also reported that the Recreation Passport has received a lot of push. In Detroit alone, Recreation Passport sales have increased 2.5% from a year ago. Wayne County has jumped from 9% to 17%, all being credited to Belle Isle and the media coverage.

Commissioner Nichols commented that he attended the first BIPAC meeting. Participation was excellent with good comments. Some locals are in favor of the state managing the island, while others still have their skepticism, but the room was packed. Commissioner Nichols further reminded the committee that, although Belle Isle becoming the 102nd state park is magnificent, 101 great state parks still remain.

Questions were raised about some of the facilities on the island, such as the Dossin Museum and the Conservatory, and who will continue to operate those facilities. Olson responded that they will continue to be operated by the same persons or entities; however, the BIPAC is reviewing all agreements and the possibility of partnering with other organizations and universities in the future.

Olson then presented the Land Use Order of the Director Amendment No. 5 of 2014 to establish and enforce the rules for Belle Isle Park.

Committee members questioned the role of the BIPAC in relation to this committee and who the decision makers would be regarding matters relating to Belle Isle. Olson responded that the BIPAC was created through the lease agreement for implementation of park improvements, park planning and public safety. However, matters such as park rules, regulations or any Land Use Orders of the Director fall within this committee's jurisdiction. The committee requested that matters of this nature, that fall within their jurisdiction, be presented to them for review and approval before changes are implemented.

The Resolution in Support of adopting rules for Belle Isle was presented and read to the committee.

Commissioner Klarr asked for a motion on the Resolution in Support of Adopting Rules for Belle Isle Park. Tom Bailey motioned to support the Resolution; Mike McDonald seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried and Resolution No. 02-2014-02 supporting the Director's Land Use Order establishing rules for Belle Isle Park was adopted.

Chief Olson then excused himself from the meeting to attend a Senate Appropriations hearing.

GRAYMONT PROPOSAL

Commissioner Klarr explained that this committee requested a presentation on this matter because some committee members were receiving phone calls and/or had concerns regarding Graymont's proposal to purchase state land for limestone mining versus the traditional leasing of the land, and the effect this type of transaction would have on revenue to the Park Endowment Fund. As an advisory committee whose focus is to make sure funds to protect and enhance Michigan's natural resources and the state parks system are preserved and protected, they wanted to make sure they understood the proposal, that their concerns were addressed and, more importantly, how to properly answer questions from their constituents.

Steve Sutton, DNR Real Estate Services Section, presented information about Graymont's proposal, which was then construed as a public meeting. Residents from the area continued to raise questions and voice their concerns so this subject consumed most of this committee's time on the agenda. After numerous questions and discussion on the matter, the DNR Upper Peninsula Regional Coordinator, Stacey Haughey-Welling, offered to meet with these citizens and other DNR staff involved in this proposal in another area to address their questions and concerns so this committee could move on through the rest of their agenda.

After lengthy, in-depth discussions about every aspect of this proposal, Steve encouraged committee members to visit the web site periodically to keep apprised of this proposal and to feel free to submit their comments on-line or to him directly. A copy of Steve's presentation will also be provided to the committee members for their own personal use or in addressing questions from their constituencies.

Commissioner Klarr acknowledged that this is an important issue and can understand the resident's passion and concern. She thanked Stacy for offering to sit down with these citizens, especially since they did travel such a distance to have their concerns addressed.

Commissioner Klarr asked Sutton to keep this committee apprised as things progress with this proposal. This committee is concerned with the effect this transaction could have on lost revenues to the state, especially the state Park Endowment Fund, recreational use/opportunities and trails. Sutton commented that the plan is to have a public meeting in March, and then present the proposal to the NRC in April, with possible action in May.

Commissioner Klarr further encouraged committee members to submit their comments and concerns to Steve Sutton and keep an eye on the web site for further action or updates regarding this proposed transaction.

RECREATION PASSPORT GRANT PROCESS UPDATE

Steve DeBrabander, Grants Management Section Manager, and **Sam Duncan, Land and Water Conservation Fund and Recreation Passport program manager**, were introduced. Commissioner Klarr reminded the committee that they are here to present information about the Recreation Passport Grant program and its process at the request of some committee members who felt it was time to reevaluate the program and determine if the process needs to be streamlined.

DeBrabander reminded the committee that the Recreation Passport grant program was established under Public Act 32 of 2010, legislation that replaced the motor vehicle permit with the Recreation Passport. He also pointed out that 10% of Recreation Passport revenue is allocated to the grant program to provide recreational development grants to local units and municipalities. DeBrabander further covered different aspects of the grant program, including a comparison chart to other DNR-administered grant programs, the process and timeline for processing Recreation Passport grant applications, match requirements and scoring criteria.

Steve then gave an overview of the number of Recreation Passport grant applications received and awarded in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Committee member, **Ann Conklin**, reported that she and a couple other committee members were the ones that raised the issue of streamlining the Recreation Passport process and requested an overview of the program to determine if it can or should be reevaluated. She admitted that, after seeing Steve's presentation and being able to visualize the process and grants that have been awarded since its inception, it is obvious that the Recreation Passport grant program is a more simplified and streamlined process than other grant programs.

The committee thanked Steve for providing this information. Commissioner Klarr agreed that the task force that was recently created to reevaluate the Recreation Passport grant program can be disbanded, but she asks that Steve report to this committee twice each year on the status of the Recreation Passport grant program, funds and grants awarded. Commissioner Nichols also encouraged committee members to attend dedication ceremonies in or near their communities when they receive funding from the Recreation Passport grant program.

DeBrabander also mentioned he would put the grant program comparison chart on the web site.

RECREATION PASSPORT MARKETING UPDATE

Jason Fleming, acting Resource Management Section Chief, reported that he has met with McCann and Erickson (marketing firm) to discuss marketing efforts for the Recreation Passport. He reported that staff is currently in the process of pulling together information, data, marketing needs and expectations to give to McCann and Erickson for their information, review and discussion. Commissioner Klarr asked that he keep the committee apprised as things progress with this marketing firm and efforts to market the Recreation Passport.

Committee members offered suggestions on where to focus some of their marketing efforts, to include opportunity/growth in marketing the Recreation Passport to non-residents and non-resident sales, overnight lodging opportunities to include the non-traditional camping experiences and opportunities that are offered in Michigan state parks (i.e. yurts, lodges, tee pees, etc.), and include incentives or awards to those households that purchase Recreation Passports for all their vehicles.

LAND USE ORDER OF THE DIRECTOR AMENDMENT NO. 4 OF 2014

Attention was brought to Land Use Order No. 4 of 2014 (LUOD) to reopen certain state forest campgrounds and designate some of the campgrounds for equestrian use. This order will be presented to the NRC at today's meeting for information, and may be eligible for approval at the March 2014 NRC meeting.

Brad Garmon, present for committee member Chris Graham, raised a concern about Little Brevoort Lake North state forest campground being reopened for equestrian use and the effect it may have on the natural area designation. After in-depth discussion about the natural area, it was agreed that the committee would support the Resolution and the Land Use Order, as long as it is confirmed that equestrian use will not impact the natural area and is cleared up before the LUOD is presented to the NRC for action in March.

Commissioner Klarr asked for a motion on the Resolution in Support of Land Use Orders of the Director Amendment No. 4 of 2014 to Reopen Two State Forest Campgrounds and Designate Three as Equestrian Campgrounds. Brad Garmon motioned to approve the Resolution as long as it is verified that equestrian use will not have any impact on the natural area; Mike McDonald seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried and Resolution No. 02-2014-01 was adopted, pending resolution of the natural area issue.

WORK SESSION

Due to the amount of time it took to address the Graymont proposal, the committee worked quickly through the remaining items on the agenda and will postpone in-depth discussion on 2014 priorities and subcommittees until the next meeting.

The subject of an opt-out option for the Recreation Passport was also discussed. Commissioner Nichols and Commissioner Klarr agreed that the Sustainable Funding subcommittee of the MSPAC should start actively meeting to address the opt-out for the Recreation Passport and make connections with the Secretary of State. This subcommittee should also begin to address any other fee or budget-related issues related to the Recreation Passport and the state parks system (i.e. Park Endowment Fund), and whether the parks should start enforcing the 'double the fee at the gate' or raise the fee again on the Recreation Passport as is allowed in legislation.

Jason Fleming offered to start inviting sustainable funding subcommittee members to participate in his meetings or conference calls with the Secretary of State, or to schedule meetings with the subcommittee to address these issues.

It was also agreed that committee members should be invited to or attend any future meetings regarding marketing efforts for the Recreation Passport and Michigan state parks. Former commissioner Annoesjka Steinman was the liaison to the NRC's Marketing and Outreach Advisory Committee. A new liaison needs to be identified and should be the lead in coordinating meetings or updates on marketing issues.

Commissioner Nichols also recommended that someone on this committee should become actively involved in legislative matters that have an effect on Michigan state parks or any legislation that is introduced that could affect the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund or the State Park Endowment Fund.

Commissioner Nichols reported that the Outcomes Progress Report will be finalized and presented to Director Creagh for his review and approval.

The committee officially adjourned at 11:45 a.m.