



Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Commission

125 W. Lincoln Street

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Caro, MI 48723

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MINUTES OF THE APRIL 20TH 2022 MEETING OF THE TUSCOLA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, April 20, 2022 – 3:00 pm
Commissioners' Board Room of the H.H. Purdy Building
125 W Lincoln Street, Caro MI

Roll call:

Appointed members: Terri Eden (Vice Chair), Steve Escott, Robert McKay (Chairman), Paul Newby, Megan Rule, Kim Vaughan;

Ex-Officio members: Lonnie Kester (Planning Commission Chairman -- or designee: Cynthia Kapa or Rick Boylan), Bob Mantey (Drain Commissioner – or designee Dara Hood or Alicia Little);

Julie Matuszak (Designated Road Commissioner).

Excused Absence(s): – Terri Lynn Eden --

Call to order: With quorum present consisting of Steve Escott, Lonnie Kester, Bob Mantey, Julie Matuszak, Robert McKay, Paul Newby, and Kim Vaughan, the April 20th meeting of the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order at 3:04 pm by Chairman McKay.

Others present: Shelly Lutz of the Tuscola County Executive Office, Clayette Zechmeister – Tuscola County Controller-Administrator, Mike Miller – Director of Tuscola County Buildings and Grounds Department, Pam Shook – Vanderbilt Park Host, and Nancy Barrios from Cass City.

Approval of agenda: Approval of agenda moved by Escott, supported by Mantey, and passed unanimously.

Approval of minutes: Approval of Minutes of March 16, 2021, meeting moved by Escott, supported by Kester, and passed unanimously.

Public comments: Nancy Barrios expressed her concert over the Advertiser article of April 16 by Mark Haney which she felt cast the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission in an undeserved negative light. She also mentioned actions that she had taken in the fourth quarter of 2020 to remedy some of the capital improvement and/or maintenance issues which existed at Vanderbilt Park and Campgrounds at the time and which still have not been addressed by the Board of Commissioners.

Opening comment by the Chair:

Today's monthly meeting is a quarterly meeting prescribed by the Commission's by-laws. The purpose of today's meeting scheduled to begin at 3:00 pm is to both comply with the quarterly meeting requirement and also surround the requirement of a public review/hearing on the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation 5-Year Mater Plan. The review/hearing is to commence at 3:30 pm today, after which the quarterly meeting will return into session for its conclusion. In short, there will be two meetings held today within the same general afternoon time-frame, each with a separate purpose and unique agenda.

Review of correspondence(s) received, and/or relevant action(s) by the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners:

2022-04-12 email from Clayette Zechmeister, Tuscola County Controller-Administrator:

Good Afternoon Mr. McKay,

The Board of Commissioner would like you to present an update on the Parks and Rec Board activities and especially plans for Vanderbilt Park in the next few years.

Can you attend the Committee of the Whole meeitng on Monday April 25th?

Please let me know as soon as possible.

Thank You

Reporting of outside meetings and/or other official activity:

Chairman McKay attended the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners meeting remotely but was not able to participate fully owing to what seemed to be a microphone malfunction.

Mention of upcoming outside meetings and/or other official activity:

The next meeting of the Cass River Greenway will be held Wednesday, May 11, at 1:00 pm in the Vassar City Hall Chamber in the Vassar City Hall located at 287 E. Huron Avenue in Vassar. Mi. Chairman asked if there were a volunteer from the Tuscola County Parks and

Recreation Commission to attend in place of the Chairman, but nobody expressed interest in so doing.

Correspondence and Communication:

2022-04-18 letter from Park & Rec Chairman McKay to Board of Commissioners Chairman Bardwell.

Vanderbilt County Park Special Revenue Account Status dated March 31, 2022:

04/11/2022 09:41 AM		REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE REPORT FOR TUSCOLA COUNTY				Page: 1/1	
User: TCACONDR		PERIOD ENDING 03/31/2022					
DB: Tuscola County							
GL NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	2022 AMENDED BUDGET	YTD BALANCE 03/31/2022 NORMAL (ABNORMAL)	ACTIVITY FOR MONTH 03/31/2022 INCREASE (DECREASE)	AVAILABLE BALANCE NORMAL (ABNORMAL)	% BDGT USED	
Fund 208 - COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION							
Revenues							
Dept 000 - CONTROL							
208-000-643.100	VANDERBILT DUMP STATION	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	
208-000-651.100	VANDERBILT PARK CAMPING FEES	20,000.00	1,140.00	200.00	18,860.00	5.70	
208-000-652.000	VANDERBILT PARK- PARKING FEES	7,500.00	8,156.66	3,237.90	(656.66)	108.76	
Total Dept 000 - CONTROL		27,600.00	9,296.66	3,437.90	18,303.34	33.68	
TOTAL REVENUES		27,600.00	9,296.66	3,437.90	18,303.34	33.68	
Expenditures							
Dept 000 - CONTROL							
208-000-707.000	PARKS COMMISSION PER DIEMS	5,000.00	924.95	500.00	4,075.05	18.50	
208-000-715.000	F.I.C.A.	400.00	70.21	38.26	329.79	17.55	
208-000-718.000	RETIREMENT	0.00	2.00	0.00	(2.00)	100.00	
208-000-718.100	POB IN LIEU OF RETIREMENT	0.00	14.75	0.00	(14.75)	100.00	
208-000-727.100	VANDERBILT PARK - SUPPLIES	1,000.00	6.63	0.00	993.37	0.66	
208-000-801.100	CONT. SVCS VANDERBILT PARK	8,000.00	1,464.69	923.94	6,535.31	18.31	
208-000-801.200	TREE TRIMMING/REMOVAL	1,500.00	0.00	0.00	1,500.00	0.00	
208-000-861.000	TRAVEL	700.00	451.28	227.10	248.72	64.47	
208-000-920.100	UTILITIES VANDERBILT PARK	8,000.00	1,256.37	565.09	6,743.63	15.70	
208-000-936.100	GROUNDS CARE/MAINT VANDERBILT	1,500.00	214.00	214.00	1,286.00	14.27	
Total Dept 000 - CONTROL		26,100.00	4,404.88	2,468.39	21,695.12	16.88	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		26,100.00	4,404.88	2,468.39	21,695.12	16.88	
Fund 208 - COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION:							
TOTAL REVENUES		27,600.00	9,296.66	3,437.90	18,303.34	33.68	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		26,100.00	4,404.88	2,468.39	21,695.12	16.88	
NET OF REVENUES & EXPENDITURES		1,500.00	4,891.78	969.51	(3,391.78)	326.12	
BEG. FUND BALANCE		7,877.16	7,877.16				
NET OF REVENUES/EXPENDITURES - 2021			6,277.05		6,277.05		
END FUND BALANCE		9,377.16	19,045.99				

Media coverage & other items related to parks and recreation:

- 1) Thumbnet.Net News, March 20, 2022, “Caro business developing miniature golf course” by Mary Drier.
- 2) Thumbnet.Net News, April 03, 2022, “Unionville's park to get some improvements” by Mary Drier.
- 3) Thumbnet.Net News, April 06, 2022, “Caseville's proposed Riverside Park gets additional funding” by Mary Drier.
- 4) Thumbnet.Net News, April 06, 2022, “Tuscola's August election shaping up with some contested seats” by Mary Drier.
- 5) Tuscola County Advertiser, April 16, 2022, “Park Problems?: Commissioners question current state of Vanderbilt Park” by Mark Haney.
- 6) Thumbnet.Net News, April 18, 2022, “Vanderbilt Park Hearing” by Mary Drier and Miranda Cameron.

Old Business:

The Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission monthly meeting was recessed at 3:40 pm to accommodate a Public Hearing/Review of the draft Parks and Recreation 5-Year Master Plan. The Parks and Recreation Commission returned to session at 4:08 pm with a quorum in attendance consisting of Steve Escott, Lonnie Kester, Bob Mantey, Julie Matuszak, Robert McKay, Paul Newby, and Kim Vaughan.

New Business:

Discussion of Michigan’s Open Meetings Act, particularly in light of amendments thereto made as a result of Covid-19 pandemic.

Public Comments:

– none --

Announcement of next scheduled meeting:

The next scheduled meeting of the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission is 3:00 pm on Wednesday, May 18, 2022, in the Commissioners’ Board Room of the H.H. Purdy Building located at 125 W. Lincoln Street in Caro MI.

Further comments or announcements by members of the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission:

Bob Mantey: 1) that he would like to see public comments on 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan which have been, or will be, submitted by email; 2) that resolutions supporting

local Parks and Recreation funding initiatives should be understood as important work of the Parks and Recreation Commission as they are a mechanism which enhances the ability of local villages and townships to obtain grants for local park improvements.

Lonnie Kester: 1) that past support for Southern Links trail by Parks and Rec was important even if no funding from Tuscola County was linked to that support. 2) that trails need to be mentioned in the 5-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan – particularly the extension of Southerlinks from Millington to Vassar.

Steve Escott: that he felt the recent Advertiser March 14 article cast the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission in a negative light which wasn't at all fair in that the Commission's role is exclusively advisory to the Board of Commissioners, and by itself it does not have budgetary authority to directly undertake capital improvements.

Group discussion took place as to whether "profit motive" or the notion that Vanderbilt County Park and Campgrounds, or any public park, should be funded only at the level to which it derives revenue through user fees.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Vaughan, supported by Matuszak, and passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:05 pm.

Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Commission Mission Statement

The mission of the Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Commission is to advise the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners on matters of policy and practice pertaining to the encouragement, establishment, and provision of recreational opportunities for residents of, and visitors to, Tuscola County.

PARK PROBLEMS?: COMMISSIONERS QUESTION THE CURRENT STATE OF VANDERBILT PARK

Tuscola County Advertiser
by Mark Haney April 16, 2022



CARO – When Doug DuRussel recently visited Vanderbilt Park, he did not like what he saw.

“If you go out to the park,” the District 4 county commissioner told the rest of the county Board of Commissioners at Monday’s Committee of the Whole session, “it does not look good.”

He said the sign is old, the posts on the guardrail are rotting. The driveway is uneven and difficult to navigate. The camping spots aren’t level. The volleyball pit “is nothing you’d want to dive into,” he said.

“To me it is just the most neglected part of the county,” DuRussel said.

District 1 Commissioner Tom Young said the park is looking better thanks to the last five years of investments the county has made in to the park. District 2 Commissioner Thomas Bardwell said the county has invested in water service, a sewer dump station, fire rings and other things in the park.

“Why has it declined?” he said. “It is our only park.”

Park host Pam Shook, of Wisner Township, said the park is not a priority of the parks and recreation committee. According to the new five-year plan being drawn up, she said, the committee is prioritizing rail trails and developing property along the Cass River in Indianfields

Township. The public hearing on that plan is 3:30 p.m. April 20 in the board room at the HH Purdy Building in Caro. The plan does call for \$2.3 million to be invested in the park in county American Recovery Plan Act funding, if the commissioners approve. The committee also is seeking to land some grants to fund parks development.

"They have big dreams," Shook said, "when I think little baby steps is where we need to go."

Buildings and grounds supervisor Mike Miller said until District 3 Commissioner Kim Vaughan, who operates an RV park, came on the board and did an assessment to determine if the park could start paying for itself, the county had been spending \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year on the park just to keep it going.

"Prior to all of that happening, there were multiple times when the county just tried to get rid of that park," Miller said. "We didn't want to deal with that park." In his 20 years working for the county, Miller said, the only money put into the park was funds "just to keep the lights on. And that was it." And there were periods when the park was completely closed, he said.

Bardwell said the county went to great lengths, at one time, to determine what it could do with the park which was given to the county by the Vanderbilt family. The county learned it didn't have any options.

Now money is coming in to the park from fees and such to keep it going. But, Miller said, the commissioners decided not to replace those posts, for example, because they wanted instead to put in a fence and the county wasn't ready to do that yet. Leveling the camping sites is another solution that ran into a funding issue.

"There are a lot of things happening here," he said. "It is not that the park is neglected. The park is the way it is because of the funding we've been given. And I think we've done the best we can with what we've been given."

District 5 Commissioner Dan Grimshaw said investment in the park hasn't kept up with the demand for its use or the changes in the needs of campers.

"If we are going to have it as a park you can use for camping," he said, "they gotta be able for use if with campers, with enough space and all of the other stuff."

Vaughan said the park is prone to flooding at various times of the year, based on which way the winds are blowing on any given day, so the improvements that can be made are restricted. The horseshoe pits, Shook said, aren't useable 90 percent of the year because of where they were placed and where the water tends to back up into the park.

One key problem is the park drive. it often is used by trucks as a route to get from the end of Quanicasse Road to Gilmore Road. Grimshaw said one solution would be to upgrade the park drive and make sure it isn't used by traffic going through to get to the other side.

"We'll put a barricade up so there is no through traffic," Grimshaw said.

The road is the key issue and whether or not the land surrounding it belongs to the county or not.

"That road needs to be addressed," he said.

“Why have we never closed it off?” Bardwell said.

“It has never been proposed,” Miller said

The park drive technically isn’t a county road because it isn’t wide enough nor is it maintained by the Tuscola County Road Commission. “The road commission won’t touch it right now,” Shook said, until Miller gives them permission. And they couldn’t right now because of all of the water.

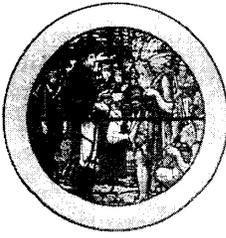
The commissioners wanted to get additional input from parks and recreation committee chairman Robert McKay at the next Committee of the Whole session on April 25, but McKay is unable to attend that day.

“We need to redirect the direction of that parks and rec,” Bardwell said, “and reset the priorities, as we appoint that board, to reflect Vanderbilt Park and get recommendations for projects for this year.”

The goal, apparently, is to improve the park.

“It’s a sad case if we can’t run one little park,” Bardwell said.

“It should be the jewel of the county,” DuRussel said, “and not the ugly stepchild.”



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Robert W. McKay, Chairman

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Monday, April 18, 2022

Thomas Bardwell, Chairman
Tuscola County Board of Commissioners
H.H. Purdy Building
125 W. Lincoln Street
Caro, MI 48723

Hello Chairman Bardwell,

On Thursday, I attended the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners' Meeting by remote means, as I believe you are aware. During the final segment of that meeting, matters pertaining to the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation and Vanderbilt County Park and Campgrounds were discussed, much of which appeared in the Saturday, April 16, edition of the Tuscola County Advertiser (see that article by Mark Haney as attached).

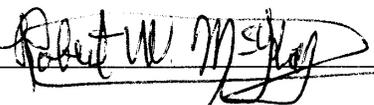
It is my understanding that personal sentiments regarding Vanderbilt Park and Campgrounds as well as the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission were brought to the attention of the Board of Commissioners at an earlier date by Pam Shook who presently serves as the Park Host of Vanderbilt County Park and Campgrounds. During the second Public Comment portion of the March 18 meeting of the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission, Ms. Shook informed the Commission that it was her intent to "take this to the Board of Commissioners", though the specifics of what she intended to "take to the board" were ambiguous at best since she had been offered two opportunities to engage in Public Comments and was present through the entire meeting in which content of the draft 2023-2027 Parks and Recreation 5-Year Master Plan was presented by the sub-committee and discussed by the full membership of the Commission.

If comments attributed to Ms. Shook which appeared in the April 16 Advertiser article are accurate, I object to her comments which read, "*the park is not a priority of the parks and recreation committee. According to the new five-year plan being drawn up, she said, the committee is prioritizing rail trails and developing property along the Cass River in Indianfields Township*".

During the April 14 meeting, there was also a passing reference from Controller – Administrator Zechmeister regarding a communication with me which took place the day before, April 13, regarding some unspecified personnel matter that evades me in as much as in my capacity as Chairman of the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission, I do not directly supervise any Tuscola County employees but only function in a legislative capacity on the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission.

I conclude my remarks with further clarification of the Park and Recreation 5-Year Master Plan timeline. The 30-day window for public input, beyond that which has already been otherwise solicited and received, began on April 13 and will conclude on May 13, 2022. Within that window of time, the Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission will also be holding a public hearing / review of the draft 5-Year Master Plan on April 20 in the Commissioners' Board Room of the H.H. Purdy Building located at 125 W. Lincoln Street in Caro MI at 3:30 pm. Announcement of this public hearing / review was published in the April 13, 2022 edition of the Tuscola County Advertiser.

At some point after May 13, 2022, the 5-Year Master Plan sub-committee will conclude its work on preparing a final version of the 5-Year Master Plan for submission to the fully assembled Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission for adoption. After that, the approved document will be sent to the Board of Commissioners for its consideration prior to subsequent filing with the State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources.



– Robert W. McKay, Chairman

Attachments:

- 1) Article by Mark Haney as published in Tuscola County Advertiser April 16 edition entitled: "Park problems?: -- Commissioners question the current state of Vanderbilt Park";
- 2) Excerpt from draft 2021-2027 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan containing objectives, goals, and Capital Improvements Schedule;
- 3) Draft Minutes of March 13 meeting of Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission.

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