

Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

Special Meeting

Tuesday August 19, 2025, 8:00 AM

Tuscola County Purdy Building Conference Room

125 West Lincoln Street, Caro, MI 48723

Call to Order:

At 8:08 A.M., Michael Clinesmith, Chairperson, called the meeting to order.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Michael Clinesmith led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Mark Putnam, Secretary, called the Roll.

Appointed Members Present: Michael Clinesmith, Chairperson; Nancy Barrios, Vice-chairperson; Mark Putnam, Secretary; Kim Vaughan, Tuscola County Board of Commissioners.

Appointed Members Absent: Vacant, Vacant, & Vacant.

Ex-Officio Present: Dara Hood, Drain Commissioner; and Julie Matuszak, Road Commissioner.

Ex-Officio Absent: Rick Boylan, Planning Commissioner.

Public Present: None.

Ex-officio Members Elevated to Voting Status:

Michael Clinesmith elevated Dara Hood and Julie Matuszak to voting status.

A quorum was present.

Approval of Agenda:

Mark Putnam, seconded by Nancy Barrios, moved to approve the August 19, 2025, agenda as presented.

Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes:

Since this was a Special Meeting, we did not approve the July 15, 2025, Minutes.

Public Comment:

None.

Review & Acceptance of Financial Reports:

Mark Putnam noted that the total number of campers—or, more accurately, the number of Camping Sites Filled—in July 2025 could be determined by dividing the total “Vanderbilt Park Camping Fees” collected (\$1,806) by the cost of an average campsite fee.

Updated Analysis [August 27, 2025]:

- **Camping Fees (July 2025):**
With a weekly site fee of \$68, July’s total camping revenue of \$1,806 equates to:
 $\$1,806 \div \$68 \text{ per week} \div 7 \text{ days} \approx 3.8 \text{ Camping Sites Filled per day in July.}$
- **Camping Fees (January–July 2025):**
Total camping revenue of \$12,168 over 7 months equates to:
 $\$12,168 \div 7 \text{ months} \div \$68 \text{ per week} \div 7 \text{ days} \approx 3.65 \text{ Camping Sites Filled per day.}$
This equals 104% of the budget for 7 months. This is a positive result.
- **Parking Fees:**
Using an estimated \$3 daily fee (parking is \$3 per day or \$20 per season):
 - July 2025 shows zero cars parked in the month.
 - January–July over 7 months equates to:
 $\$4,371 \div 7 \text{ months} \div \$3 \text{ per day} \div 30 \text{ days} \approx 6.95 \text{ cars parked per day or}$
 - The January-July deposits are 375% over the budget for the first 7 months while July deposits are zero.
 - The Park Host may not have deposited the money for cars parked in July; the county accountant may not have recorded it; or someone put the money in the Vanderbilt Park - Camping Fees account. The amount should be about \$625 for cars parked in July. Mark Putnam remembers the Park Host saying there were no people parking at the county park or something to that effect if he remembers correctly. We need to investigate this. Maybe the Park Host is not collecting parking fees now. This is a negative result.
- **Total Revenue:**
Overall, revenue for the first seven months of FY 2025 stands at 105% of the budget for the first 7 months.

Nancy Barrios, seconded by Dara Hood, moved to accept the financial reports [August 19, 2025].

Motion carried.

County Support Regarding Parcels Improvements:

Tuscola County added a \$5,000 line item labeled “Historical Grant” under County Parks & Recreation – Revenue. A corresponding \$5,000 line item for “Historical Sign” was added under County Parks & Recreation – Expenditures.

In addition, it was noted that \$12,000 has been designated under County Parks & Recreation – Expenditures for “Vanderbilt Park Renovations.”

Potential Site Plan Bids: Nancy presented to the TCP&RC commission three bids submitted for engineering services, each addressing studies and plans related to kayak launch feasibility and preliminary design:

- BMJ Engineers & Surveyors, Inc. – \$8,500
- Rowe Professional Services Company – \$4,600
- Spicer Group, Inc. – \$6,500

Background:

- BMJ has not previously completed plans for the Cass River.
- Rowe developed plans for the Evergreen Park Kayak Launch in Sanilac County on the Cass River.
- Spicer created plans for seven kayaking launch sites on the Cass River.

After discussion, and with no further comments, Nancy Barrios, seconded by Mark Putnam, moved that the Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Committee approve and accept the Spicer bid of \$6,500, and forward this recommendation to the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners.

Motion carried unanimously.

After discussion and with no further comments, Michael Clinesmith, seconded by Nancy Barrios, move that the Tuscola County Parks & Recreational Commission recommends that the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners add a line item in the amount of \$6,500 for Site Plan under Expenditures for Fund 208 - County Parks & Recreation.

Motion carried unanimously.

Renaming of “The Parcels”

Nancy Barrios suggested that the Indian Dave Memorial Landing could serve as the name for the proposed Parcels launch site.

At a prior meeting, Michael Clinesmith had raised the idea that local schools might be a source of input for renaming. At this July 2025 meeting, Nancy reported that institutions such as the

Tuscola Intermediate School District may not be able to participate in promotional naming, as they are restricted from advertising for outside entities.

After reflection, Mark Putnam proposed the name “Heartt Sawmill Landing.” He explained that the Heartt Sawmill—and likely also a grist mill—once operated on the opposite side of the Cass River at Wahjamega. The name *Wahjamega* itself is derived from the initials “W.A.H.,” referring to William A. Heartt, the principal and final owner of the Wahjamega Sawmill. The Heartt Sawmill and Dam were located along the north bank of the Cass River, positioned between a small creek that runs along Wells Road and empties into the river, and the settlement that later became Wahjamega.

Mark further noted that using the name Indian Dave may be redundant, since it is already represented in a mural across from the Tuscola County Courthouse in downtown Caro, and there is also a Chippewa Landing at the intersection of M-24 and the Cass River. He added that a future park at the Caro Dam might be an appropriate location to honor Native American heritage with a name such as Chippewa Village. The Caro Dam itself, he emphasized, is a significant part of local history and should be incorporated into future planning for recognition of both Native American and logging eras.

America250Grant Project Updates:

It was discussed that the foundation for the kiosk must be installed before the ground freezes, possibly by using a template in place of the actual structure. The narrative and photographs for the kiosk have already been prepared by Premier Productions and are now in the process of final submission to Pannier, the manufacturer, for production

Vanderbilt Park:

- **Update to Park Condition:**

- Mark Putnam raised a concern regarding a recent post on his Quanicassee Facebook page, where a photograph showed four young adults climbing on the historic Trail Marker Tree at Vanderbilt County Park. The tree, created around 1930, stands as a monument to the Chippewa Fishing Village and the trails that once passed through the site. Members of the commission suggested that a protective fence should be placed around the Trail Marker Tree to prevent future incidents. Mark emphasized that the individuals in the photo were seeking notoriety for their actions, adding, *“That’s exactly what these hoodlums wanted to achieve.”* He further suggested offering a reward to help identify and hold them accountable. Among the group—two boys and two girls—Mark noted that the apparent ringleader was a young woman distinguished by wearing a hoodie, the only one of the four to do so. Mark expressed urgency, stating, *“We need to put a stop to these types of activities.”* He reminded the commission that the Fall America250MI grant process could provide resources for signage and preservation efforts. He shared both the photo of the vandals on the tree and a separate image he took of the freestanding Trail Marker itself. While acknowledging Mark’s strong feelings on the matter, the commission agreed on the central point: protecting and

preserving Vanderbilt County Park, its Trail Marker Tree, and its Native American heritage for generations to come.

- **Project Equipment Bids:**

- Nancy Barrios contributed valuable ideas and presented bids and estimates for both children's and adult recreational equipment for our review.
- The volleyball court wasn't in use. Mark questioned if the sand was clean but pointed out that it cushions a fall. He also observed that the park and campground no longer have a beach-themed atmosphere. Maybe it could be used as a foundation for something else?
- Julie Matuszak noted that older children are using and damaging equipment meant for younger children. Mark commented that they are reliving their childhood. We need to purchase more durable playground equipment.
- The cement "corn-hole game" was found to have hard, sharp edges; using wood or possibly rubber (noting potential environmental concerns) was suggested. Mark Putnam proposed securing the playground equipment like a tire lock. It should remain movable and ADA compliant.

- **Potential Grants:**

- The group discussed the Fall America250MI Grant. Requests are due in January. The main goal of the application is to fund signage and preservation of the 1930 Native American Trail Marker Tree.

- **Potential Fencing:**

- Nancy Barrios brought bids and pictures of cement cones that could be used as barriers for drivers entering and leaving the park and campground. These cones would direct traffic around the park & campground in a slow and safe manner. These cones later could be moved or removed and sold—they weigh about 400 pounds. Cement cones seem to be a good item. Cones could be painted. They set on the ground. The current posts forming a barrier, anchored in the ground, need to be removed.
- It is essential for us to acquire items that are durable, portable, and historically relevant, aligning with the overall theme of Vanderbilt Park & Campground.

Other:

None.

Kim Vaughan left the meeting at 9:33 AM.

Adjournment:

Julie Matuszak, seconded by Nancy Barrios, moved to adjourn.

Motion carried.

The Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Commission adjourned the meeting at 9:40 A.M.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2025, at 8 A.M. at the Tuscola County Purdy Building Conference Room located at 125 West Lincoln Street, Caro, MI 48723.

Mark Putnam, Secretary, respectfully, submits the minutes:
