

Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday March 17, 2026, 8:00 AM

Tuscola County Purdy Building Conference Room

125 West Lincoln Street, Caro, MI 48723

Call to Order:

At 8:10 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 & Tuscola County Board of Commissioners Member; Mark Putnam, Secretary; William Thomas; Isabella Hill; & Joseph Ewald.

Appointed Members Absent: Vacant.

Ex-Officio Present: Jane Rymarczyk, Planning Commissioner & Dara Hood, Drain Commissioner.

Ex-Officio Absent: Julie Matuszak, Road Commissioner, Excused.

Public Present: None.

Ex-officio Member Elevated to Voting Status:

Dara Hood, Drain Commissioner.

A quorum was present with seven voting members.

Public Comment:

Mark Putnam emailed Alisha Proctor, the Tuscola County Economic Development Corporation Director, this week and asked if there was any latest information concerning the status of the

Caro Dam. Miss. Proctor responded that the TCEDC will make a public announcement at the beginning of April.

Approval of Agenda:

- Action: Nancy Barrios, seconded by Joe Ewald, motioned to approve the agenda as presented.
- Result: Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes:

- Action: Joe Ewald, seconded by Isabella Hill, motioned to amend the minutes of January 20, 2026, striking out in the Adjournment Section of the Minutes the statement "Appointed Member William Thomas departed the meeting at 9:15 A.M. Upon his departure, a quorum would no longer be present." Similarly, in that section, replace the word "Special" with "Regular".
- Result: Motion passed unanimously.

Revenue & Expenditures Report

Historical Signage

Chairman Michael Clinesmith presented the "Revenue and Expenditures Report for Tuscola County Parks & Recreation" for Commission review and discussion.

During the review, Mark Putnam noted necessary adjustments to the 2026 budgeted figures for the Historical Grant. He clarified that \$1,875 of the total \$5,000 grant was received in 2025. Consequently, the 2026 budgeted revenue is overstated by \$1,875, bringing the adjusted revenue expectation to approximately \$3,125.

Regarding expenditures, the report currently lists \$3,625 for historical signage. This is expected to be an overstatement of approximately \$625, with actual 2026 expenditures projected at \$3,000. Following these two adjustments, the 2026 Budgeted Net Fund Balance will decrease by approximately \$1,375.

Park Host Recruitment

Tuscola County is currently seeking new Park Host(s) for the upcoming season, with a goal to have the position filled by mid-April 2026. While the county will utilize a drop box for fee collection in the interim, the absence of a dedicated host is expected to lead to a decrease in overall camping and parking revenue.

Financial data from January 1 to March 13, 2026, shows:

- Total Revenue: Approximately \$2,570 collected in camping and parking fees.
- Host Compensation: Contracted services totaled \$645.
- Together they represent the 25% commission paid to the Park Hosts per their agreement.

Because the Host's pay is directly tied to a percentage of these fees, both the revenue and the expenditure for contracted services will naturally fluctuate based on the park's activity level and the presence of a Host.

Financial Summary and Budget Adjustments

Chairman Michael Clinesmith will request that the Board formalize several budget adjustments based on the current fiscal review. These changes primarily reflect corrected grant allocations and deferred projects, significantly improving the county's projected financial position for the year.

Key Budget Adjustments:

- Net Decreases: A reduction of \$1,375 due to historical grant revenue timing.
- Net Increases: Gains of \$2,580 (Parcel Site Plan), \$5,000 (deferred Vanderbilt Site Study), and \$1,700 (Per Diem surplus).
- Total Net Change: A positive adjustment of \$7,905 to the Budgeted Ending Fund Balance.

Revised Fund Projections:

If all other ordinary operating expenditures—including the \$4,000 allocated for the Vanderbilt Park cornhole playground—remain on track, the fund totals are as follows:

- Beginning Fund Balance: \$29,575
- Revised Net Activity (Revenue vs. Expenditures): A decrease of \$12,190 (an improvement over the previously reported \$20,095 deficit).
- Adjusted Budgeted Ending Fund Balance: \$17,385 (up from the initial estimate of \$9,480).

These adjustments ensure that the Tuscola County Parks & Recreation budget accurately reflects actual obligations and available resources for the remainder of 2026.

Expenditure – Vanderbilt Park Renovations

The Commission reviewed the budget for Vanderbilt County Park Renovations. It was noted that while \$12,000 was originally allocated for these renovations in 2025, those funds remained entirely unspent by the end of the fiscal year. For 2026, the budgeted expenditure for this line item has been set at \$4,000.

We made no motion to accept the Revenue & Expense Report.

Park Management and Operations

Request for Proposal (RFP) – Vanderbilt Park Host

The Commission reviewed the Request for Proposal drafted by Mark Putnam. Mike Miller, Director of Buildings & Grounds, approved the document. The RFP will be posted on the official county website (Tuscolacounty.org), and Mike Miller will place a corresponding advertisement in the *Tuscola County Advertiser* directing applicants to the online posting. The Commission noted that Vanderbilt Park is scheduled to be open for approximately eight months, from April through November.

- Action: Motion by Nancy Barrios, seconded by Dara Hood, to approve the RFP and its advertisement.
- Result: Motion passed unanimously.

Management Services Agreement

The Commission discussed the Management Services Agreement initiated by Mark Putnam, incorporating revisions reviewed by Mike Miller, Nancy Barrios, and Michael Clinesmith. This contract defines the relationship between Tuscola County and the Vanderbilt Park Host(s). It was clarified that Hosts will serve as independent contractors (requiring an EIN and compliance with all state and federal business laws) rather than county employees.

- Action: Motion by Mark Putnam, seconded by Isabella Hill, to forward the Management Services Agreement to the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners for legal review and final approval.
- Result: Motion passed unanimously.

Park Operations Policy Manual

Mark Putnam presented the Park Operations Policy Manual, developed with technical assistance from Gemini 3. Chairman Michael Clinesmith noted that the manual will serve as a valuable handbook for the Commission.

Establishment of Personnel Committee

The Commission approved the formation of an Ad Hoc Personnel Committee to interview prospective contractors for the Vanderbilt County Park Host position. The committee will conduct preliminary interviews and provide recommendations to the full Commission, which will then forward its decision to the Board of Commissioners for final hiring.

The committee will consist of Joe Ewald, Mark Putnam, and Michael Clinesmith. Nancy Barrios, who serves on both the Commission and the Board, will coordinate the hiring process between the three bodies. There are four members on the Personnel Committee. A quorum of the

Commission is six members, so this committee membership is made up of less than a quorum of the Commission.

- Action: Motion by Mark Putnam, seconded by Joe Ewald, to establish the Personnel Committee as described and composed of Joe Ewald, Mark Putnam, Michael Clinesmith, and Nancy Barrios.
- Result: Motion passed unanimously.

The Parcels: Site Plan and Naming Update

Project Presentation – Spicer

The Commission announced that Spicer is scheduled to present the completed Parcels Site Plan at the next regular meeting in April 2026.

Proposed Name Change

The Commission is currently considering a formal name change for the property currently known as "The Parcels." Nancy Barrios will notify the Tuscola County Board of Commissioners of this potential rebranding and will provide further updates as the Commission's discussions progress.

Michigan Trails & Greenways Association Membership

The Commission discussed the benefits of becoming a formal member of the Michigan Trails & Greenways Association. It was noted that the association recently supported the county by awarding a \$5,000 grant for the development of The Parcels Site Plan.

- Action: Motion by Joe Ewald, seconded by Nancy Barrios, to approve a \$100 expenditure for an annual membership in the Michigan Trails & Greenways Association. The Commission also requested that a recurring line item be added to the budget for this membership moving forward.
- Result: Motion passed unanimously.

Walking Trail Agreement – The Rail Trail Project

Nancy Barrios and Michael Clinesmith reintroduced a legacy project for Commission consideration: a proposed "Rail Trail" walking path connecting Caro and Snover, Michigan.

The proposed trail would follow an existing rail corridor where an energy company currently holds recorded rights at the Tuscola County Register of Deeds. While the project remains tabled for the time being, the Commission will begin collecting additional information to determine the feasibility of moving forward with the trail development.

Vanderbilt County Park: Site Conditions and Future Development

The Commission briefly discussed the status of the Historical Sign, the planned cornhole playground, the Vanderbilt Site Plan, and overall park conditions.

Director Mike Miller noted that the "South Park" area of Vanderbilt County Park remains consistently wet, making it difficult to navigate most of the year without specialized footwear. Nancy Barrios recalled a previous suggestion by Mark Putnam to address this by developing a Native American Trail and a Native Wild-rice Garden.

Mark Putnam expanded on this vision, noting that the area was historically known as the "Boygoning" the "Rice Knocking" or gathering place for Indigenous peoples.

Bylaws Review and Proposed Revisions

Chairman Michael Clinesmith led a review of the current Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Commission Bylaws, requesting that all members thoroughly examine the document and prepare suggestions for future updates. He noted a specific discrepancy regarding the election of officers: while the current bylaws schedule elections for the third quarter, state statute mandates they occur in January.

Mark Putnam provided the Commission with a comprehensive new draft of the bylaws for consideration. Chairman Clinesmith noted that the draft exceeded expectations in its scope. Mr. Putnam outlined several key improvements in his version, including:

- A more practical and applicable definition of a quorum.
- The formal establishment of a standing Executive Committee.
- Clearer descriptions and frameworks for committees in general.
- Modernized language designed for both readability and legal compliance.

Mr. Putnam emphasized that reviewing both the existing bylaws and the proposed draft is a fundamental responsibility of Commission membership. He noted that engaging in these documents serves as an essential exercise in governance and parliamentary procedure for all members.

2027–2032 Master Plan Update

Mark Putnam provided an update on the development of the "2027–2032 Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Master Plan." He noted that outsourcing this project would typically cost the Commission upwards of \$5,000. By developing the plan in-house, the Commission can eliminate this expense entirely.

Mr. Putnam assured the Commission that the internal draft will be professional, visually engaging, and fully ADA-compliant. He emphasized that an approved Master Plan is the essential "key" to unlocking significant grant opportunities through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other funding sources, which remain primary long-term goals for the residents of Tuscola County.

Additional Items and Brainstorming

The Commission engaged in a brainstorming session focused on enhancements for Vanderbilt County Park. Key topics included:

- Park Infrastructure: Exploring the addition of perimeter fencing to improve site management.
- Operational Expansion: Evaluating the feasibility of offering off-season camping opportunities.
- Community Engagement: Updating the official Facebook page to improve communication with the public.
- Funding Strategy: Actively identifying and applying for grants to fund these prospective park developments.

Adjournment

- Action: Dara Hood, seconded by Joe Ewald, motioned to adjourn the meeting.
- Result: The motion passed unanimously.

The Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Commission regular meeting concluded at 10:03 A.M.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 21, 2026, at 8:00 A.M. at the Tuscola County Purdy Building Conference Room, located at 125 West Lincoln Street, Caro, MI 48723.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Putnam, Secretary

