

Tuscola County Parks and Recreation Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday July 21, 2026, 8:00 AM

Tuscola County Purdy Building Conference Room

125 West Lincoln Street, Caro, MI 48723

Call to Order:

At 8:01 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.

Appointed Members Absent: Joseph Edwald, Excused & one Vacant Position.

Ex-Officio Members Present: Stephenie Dusute, Drain Commissioner & Jane Rymarczyk, Planning Commissioner.

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

Public Present: None.

Ex-officio Member Elevated to Voting Status:

Stephenie Dusute, Drain Commissioner; & Jane Rymarczyk, Planning Commissioner.

A quorum was present with seven voting members.

Approval of Agenda:

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

Public Comment:

Public Present: Charles Militello, Denise Hutchinson, & Robin Spencer.

The Commission's public comment period proved a genuine delight this month, brimming with insight, generosity, and good ideas for the future of our Tuscola County parks.

Robin Spencer, affiliated with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, offered a wonderful overview of the Sanilac Petroglyphs Historic State Park, describing both the ongoing preservation work there and the educational programming that continues to bring its history to life. Ms. Spencer is also closely associated with the Zibiwing Center in Mount Pleasant, and her presence brought a welcome depth of cultural expertise to the discussion.

The local Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, along with the Swan Creek and Black River people — today are unified as one federally recognized tribal community that stands together in strengthening the lives of its members.

Denise Hutchinson likewise spoke.

Our collaboration with Ms. Spencer and Ms. Hutchinson is more than a link to the past; it is, even more meaningfully, a bridge to our future. Together, they will help transform the Tuscola parks into places of genuine education and rejuvenation. Their knowledge and generosity will become part of the joy every guest will experience upon arriving in this great land of Tuscola — a place that offers all who visit a deeper appreciation for both life and the beauty that surrounds us.

Charles Militello, owner of the local Quanicassee shop, Chuckie's Bait & Tackle, shared how much he enjoys his role as Park Host at the Vanderbilt County Park Campgrounds. He noted that the park would benefit from stronger advertising to showcase its potential as a destination — after all, he clearly loves it as much as any visitor might. He mentioned that his Facebook page reaches a national audience and could serve as a wonderful platform for celebrating and promoting everything the park has to offer. He pointed out that the sign directing visitors to the park office, located just across the street to the west, needs to be updated with current information. A dog run, he suggested, would be a welcome addition — and the kayak path leading to Saginaw Bay deserves a good cleaning and greater use. Mr. Militello shared a lovely vision: how wonderful it would be to see Saginaw Bay from within the park itself.

Nancy Barrios added that the state access permit to the Saginaw Bay expired and has to be renewed.

Mr. Militello suggested that Wi-Fi service via Starlink, offered at a modest rate, would be a real benefit to campers and visitors alike. He noted that portable shower and bathroom facilities are currently available and could be connected to the dumping station — and that coin-operated showers might even help the amenity pay for itself over time.

All told, this month's Public Comment session was a wonderfully productive gathering of ideas, insight, and shared enthusiasm — the kind that will help our parks grow and flourish, for guests staying a single day or settling in for a longer visit or stay.

Approval of Minutes:

- **Action:** Nancy Barrios, seconded by Isabella Hill, motioned to approve the minutes.
- **Result:** The motion passed unanimously.

Secretary's Compensation:

At the invitation of Chairman Michael Clinesmith, Secretary Mark Putnam addressed the Commission regarding the scope of the Secretary's duties. He noted that the position requires considerable time and effort beyond what is captured by the current fifty-dollar per diem issued for each meeting—itsself lasting approximately two hours—and that this compensation does not account separately for the time required to prepare the minutes.

Secretary Putnam presented, as part of the meeting packet, a letter to the Commission noting that the Internal Revenue Service classifies individuals who receive a per diem as employees rather than volunteers, and that this classification brings all Commission members under the protection of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Under this Act, members must be compensated for hours worked in accordance with minimum wage requirements.

Secretary Putnam expressed that he takes genuine satisfaction in his role but noted his concern that fair compensation should reasonably account for expenses such as paper, ink, computer use, and printing, in addition to reasonable payment for the time invested in preparing the minutes.

Nancy Barrios noted that she had received a stipend during her tenure as Secretary of the Planning Commission. Jane affirmed that she faces a similar situation in her current role with the Planning Commission.

Secretary Putnam noted that compensation for the Secretary's duties is addressed within the Commission's Bylaws, as previously approved by the Board.

Discussion continued regarding the Master Plan and the possibility of engaging third-party assistance, such as Spicer, for its completion. Isabella Hill noted that, in her role as an intern, she has worked on the City of Frankenmuth's Master Plan, which similarly received outside assistance.

- **Action:** Nancy Barrios, seconded by William Thomas, moved that the Secretary—in this instance, Mark Putnam—receive a stipend of one hundred dollars in addition to the existing fifty-dollar per diem, in recognition of the time required to prepare the minutes for each meeting.
- **Result:** The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Michael Clinesmith will present the Commission's decision to the Board.

Appointment of Officers [Terms beginning October 1, 2026]:

The Election of Officers or Appointments began with the Chairperson.

- Action: Jane Rymarczyk, seconded by Nancy Barrios, motioned that Michael Clinesmith be the next Chairperson.
- Result: The motion passed unanimously.

The next appointment was for the Vice-chairperson.

- Action: Nancy Barrios, seconded by Jane Rymarczyk, motioned that Isabella Hill be the next Vice-chairperson.
- Result: The motion passed unanimously.

The last appointment was for Secretary.

- Action: Nancy Barrios, seconded by Jane Rymarczyk, motioned that Mark Putnam be the next Secretary.
- Result: The motion passed unanimously.

All new officers will begin their term of service beginning October 1, 2026.

Financial Reports/Budget Adjustments:

Chairman Michael Clinesmith reviewed the Revenue & Expenditure Report for County Parks & Recreation, followed by a review of the Budget, and invited additional input from the Commission.

He reported that the current Net of Revenues & Expenditures stood at approximately four thousand dollars to date, a result the Commission received with considerable enthusiasm.

Nancy Barrios noted that the replica Trail Marker Sign would cost approximately two thousand dollars and recommended that this expense be budgeted accordingly.

Mark Putnam added that Vanderbilt Park Camping Fees could reach between thirty and forty thousand dollars for the year, an unprecedented figure. He commended Charles Militello for his efforts as Park Host in achieving this projected result, and extended his appreciation to all members of the Commission for their contributions as well.

The Commission observed that many revenue figures exceeded projections, while expenditures remained below budgeted amounts—a favorable indication of the Commission's fiscal stewardship.

Chairman Michael Clinesmith will present an updated Budget to the Board.

- Action: Nancy Barrios, seconded by Isabella Hill, motioned that the Financial Statements be filled.
- Result: The motion passed unanimously.

Recommendation to Board for The Parcel's New Name:

Mark Putnam presented the results of the naming survey to the Commission. Indian Dave, or Ishdonquit, received seventy-two recommendations; Louisa Nelson-Joshua received forty-four; and Mark Joshua, or Maish-ke-aw-she, received sixteen. Secretary Putnam noted that many respondents expressed a preference for the Native American name to appear first in the final designation. Mr. Putnam totally agreed.

He further noted that Denise Hutchinson had reached out to him during the survey process, offering to provide input and to consult with others from the Chippewa/Ojibwa community of Tuscola County, as well as with the local tribe. This offer was graciously accepted. Secretary Putnam invited Ms. Hutchinson and her friend, Robin Spencer, to attend this meeting of the Commission, with the understanding that their input would carry the final say in how the name of Ishdonquit, or Indian Dave, should be presented as a park name.

Secretary Putnam then offered insight into Ishdonquit's ancestry, citing a 1904 article from the *Tri-County Chronicle* in which Ishdonquit was also referred to as Tus-co-la. He noted that the name Tuscola County is recorded as a neologism coined by Henry Schoolcraft, meaning "Level Land," and that it has likewise been associated with the phrase "Warrior Prairie," a prairie being generally understood as flat terrain. He observed that Michigan's Thumb region was historically referred to by the English as the "Flat Country."

Secretary Putnam went on to note that the Chippewa/Ojibwa word *Desakamigaa* means flat or level land. He noted that among the Chippewa assembled at the 1787 Detroit Council was a figure named Tee-ka-mi-ga-zee, whose name bears a close resemblance to *Desakamigaa*, and may likewise carry the meaning of "Flat Land." It appeared to Secretary Putnam that Ishdonquit may have been a relative or descendant of Tee-ka-mi-ga-zee, whose name appears to be preserved within the name Tuscola County itself.

He noted that although many historical records identify Ishdonquit as Ottawa, intermarriage between the Ottawa and Chippewa tribes was common, and this presents a fascinating dimension to the story of Ishdonquit, or Indian Dave.

In discussion, Denise Hutchinson and Robin Spencer, together with input from Nancy Barrios recommending inclusion of the word "Memorial," led the Commission to agree upon the new name of The Parcels, recorded in the following vote. Upon the recommendation of Denise Hutchinson and Robin Spencer, the "i" in Ishdonquit was changed to an "e" making it Ishdonquet:

- **Action:** Nancy Barrios, seconded by Isabella Hill, moved that the new name of The Parcel be recorded as follows:
Ishdonquet "Crossing Cloud"
Memorial Park
- **Result:** The motion passed unanimously.

The 2027 Budget:

For the 2027 Budget, Camping Fees were budgeted at \$27,000, with Renovations budgeted at \$12,000, while Chairman Michael Clinesmith indicated that additional line items of interest would be determined in consultation with the Board.

Charles Militello shared several proposals for the coming year, including plans to decorate the park for the Halloween season, an interest in establishing an "Ice Season" or otherwise extending park operations to be open year-round, and a desire to fill in the Central Street at Vanderbilt Park to improve its overall level grade.

Mr. Militello further recommended that camping-related items, such as bug spray and other convenience goods, be made available for purchase on-site.

Nancy Barrios reported that Robert Zeilinger had suggested improving The Parcel in stages, with the first stage involving the creation of a picnic area, and the second stage involving the development of a walkway or pathway spiraling down to the Cass River, in keeping with the spirit of the Spicer Plan.

These topics will be discussed further in the months ahead.

Historical Kiosk Sign Dedication:

The Commission discussed plans for the upcoming dedication ceremony, noting that invitations would be extended to residents, the Commission, the Board, America250MI, and politicians currently in office as well as candidates for office.

A flag-raising ceremony conducted by local veterans is planned as part of the proceedings, and cookies, refreshments, and popcorn will be provided for attendees.

- **Action:** Nancy Barrios, seconded by Mark Putnam, moved that the Historical Kiosk Sign Dedication Ceremony will take place on Saturday, August 22, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM at Vanderbilt County Park & Campgrounds.
- **Result:** The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Michael Clinesmith formed a Committee for the Kiosk Sign Dedication, to consist of Michael Clinesmith, Nancy Barrios, Mark Putnam, and Charles Militello.

Cornhole Update

The cornhole game is equipped and being used.

Review of Park Rules

Michael Clinesmith formed the Park Rules Committee consisting of Micheal Clinesmith, Jane Rymarczyk, and Charles Militello.

Fee Schedule Update:

- **Action:** Jane Rymarczyk, seconded by Mark Putnam, moved to approve the following Fee Schedule for 2027:

Regular Parking: Daily, \$5; Season, \$40.

Camping: Daily, \$30; Weekly, \$175; Monthly, \$550; Summer, \$1,800; Winter, \$1,600.

The Summer Season runs from April 1 to October 31.

The Winter Season runs from November 2 to March 31.

Pavilion Fee: Daily, \$75.

- **Result:** The motion passed unanimously.

Vanderbilt County Park & Campgrounds—Site Plan

Nancy Barrios said that there was only so much high ground at the park. It comes at a premium.

Update on Vanderbilt Park Condition

Charles Militello indicated that according to the State of Michigan there can only be 20 campsites at Vanderbilt County Park & Campgrounds.

County Parks Meeting for Local Jurisdictions:

Chairman Michael Clinesmith suggested holding a late fall meeting that would include an invitation to representatives from other local jurisdictions to attend the Commission's Regular Tuscola County Meeting.

The 2023–2027 Master Plan Submission:

The Commission noted that it now has access to the State's submission site for municipal Master Plans. The State of Michigan requires all municipalities to submit a Master Plan.

Nancy Barrios responded that outsourcing the Master Plan would cost approximately \$20,000 and noted that the Master Plan is a required component for eligibility for Michigan DNR Grants.

Nancy Barrios Leaves Meeting

Nancy Barrios left this Wednesday, July 21, 2026, meeting at 10:20, leaving six voting members and a quorum.

Adjournment

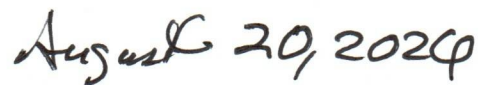
- Action: Isabell Hill, seconded by Mark Putnam, motioned to adjourn the meeting.
- Result: The motion passed unanimously.

This Tuscola County Parks & Recreation Commission Regular Meeting concluded at 10:21 A.M.

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday August 18, 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

Handwritten signature of Mark Putnam in cursive script.Handwritten date August 20, 2024 in cursive script.