



COUNTY PARKS BOARD
Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2021

- I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER:** The regular meeting of the Natrona County Parks Board brought to order at 5:30p.m by Chairman Roy Buck.
- II. ROLL CALL:** Chairman Roy Buck, Jim Miller, Stuart Hill and Tina Kruse. Parks Director Mike Haigler. Brook Kaufman (Liaison) via conference call.
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- IV. APPROVAL:** Jim Miller motioned for approval of the February 11th, 2021 meeting minutes. Stuart Hill seconded the motion. Motioned carried.

Roy Buck announced that he has put in his resignation as the Chairman of the Natrona County Parks Board effective as of March 31st, 2021. The Parks Board will need a new Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary.

Stuart Hill stated that he would like to nominate Jim Miller as the Chairman.

Jim Miller replied that he rejects that nomination. He stated that he would like to elect Stuart Hill.

Stuart Hill asked Tina if she was interested.

Tina Kruse responded no.

Roy Buck asked Jim Miller about being Vice Chairman.

Jim Miller responded that he would like to remain as the Secretary. He would like to nominate Tina for Vice Chair.

Stuart Hill seconded that nomination.

Roy Buck clarified that they have a nomination for Stuart Hill as Chairman. Tina Kruse as the Vice Chairman and Jim Miller as the Secretary. Roy asked if there was any discussion.

Stuart Hill stated that they know that this could change if they get a new person. This could be temporary.

Stuart Hill motioned for the acceptance of the new officers.

Roy Buck called for the vote.

The vote passed.

- V. REPORTS: Park Director:** Stuart Hill approved the Directors Report as written with no objections.

A. MOUNTAIN PARKS UPDATE:

1. Mountain well/water system:

Mike Haigler reported that not much else has taken place up there since the last meeting.

2. Trail center:

Mike Haigler reported that there is power and the cameras are operating but nothing else to report on.

3. Rotary Park Bridle Trail Construction:

Nothing to report.

B. PATHFINDER/ALCOVA

1. Road Maintenance Project:

Mike Haigler reported that they did a walk through Monday on the roads. There are some signs that need to be done in order to satisfy the Bureau of Reclamation. This project is pretty much wrapped up.

2. Full Hookup Bath House:

Nothing to report.

3. Lowering of Alcova Lake:

Nothing to report.

4. Disturbance of Federal Land without a Permit:

Mike Haigler reported that the disturbance at Alcova was taken care of this week. Mike reported that he hadn't been out to see it yet but the individual told him that it had been taken care of. It has not been seeded yet but it will be, come the proper time for seeding. The Bureau still needs to look at the reclamation work.

5. RFP Pathfinder Master Plan Project:

Nothing to report.

VI. CivicRec (online reservation system):

Mike Haigler reported that they had anticipated launching on April 5th but it may have to be pushed out a bit further. There are still some mapping that needs to get done. He will be meeting with the consultant next week. Signs are currently being made. There have been comments made from some people mostly about group camping; they want to back trailers up to other trailers. They will not be able to do that but there are other campgrounds that they can do that at it but it won't be Black Beach or Okie Beach.

Parks Rules and Regulations:

Mike Haigler reported the rules and regulations are ready to be advertised on the 28th. That will run for 45 days then the County Commissioners will have a public meeting on May 4th to hear any comments or accept the rules as written.

Stuart Hill asked if there had been any changes since they last saw them.

Mike Haigler responded that it has been modified for the reservation system so the rules comply with the system. The reservation system had not been fully discussed when the Parks Board reviewed them the first time. He reported that he could get that out to the Parks Board members. The Sherriff also changed some of the front-end rules where he couldn't enforce things under certain statutes but those were minor changes. Mike reported that he expects to have some comments particularly on the reservation side of things.

Stuart Hill asked what date the meeting was.

Mike Haigler responded that it will go into the paper on the 28th and then May 4th will be the 46th day. If for some reason there was a delay, it would still be legal to hold it off until another County Commission meeting but they have to advertise for those 45 days.

Stuart Hill stated that he was at Alcovia this last weekend around the cabin areas. He stated that the roads are fantastic. He reported that the people out there that have

leases, have approached him and are very happy. He stated that they are waiting for the first rainstorm to see what happens.

Stuart Hill reiterated that they have power on the mountain but that is all they have.

Mike Haigler responded that they are still waiting on the chlorinator to ship. He is not sure where it is coming from but it is made in China. Mike also commented that he wanted to reiterate that they are going to pull the pump that is out at the lake. They are putting new pipe in and taking care of some infractions, they had two years ago with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). It is a drainage issue. It's minor stuff that needs fixed, it just wasn't done. It will be a good system for the summer.

Stuart Hill asked if there were any other structure changes out there.

Mike Haigler responded no.

Stuart Hill asked if Pathfinder was moving forward with the Request for proposal (RFP).

Mike Haigler responded that there were some questions on that today from some folks but the RFP will be written and go out for the engineering to be done. Whenever that is completed, whoever the successful engineer is, it will be put out to bid probably next winter or maybe prior. It will go into construction the spring of 2022.

Stuart Hill asked if that was around the Marina area.

Mike Haigler responded that yes it is the campground at the Marina and the boat ramp.

Stuart Hill asked if they were able to do any work on the boat ramp this winter.

Mike Haigler reported no, they haven't done anything. The issue is the dock. Through the engineering, they hope to put a more permanent dock structure that can be

moved in and out without having to do it on a cable and an anchor. It doesn't work when the winds come up. Ideally, they will rebuild the ramp. It will depend on how high the lake gets this year if they can do anything with it. They are not able to do anything when it is freezing.

Stuart Hill asked if they had lost a new employee.

Mike Haigler reported that yes; the candidate that took the job was offered another job. He sent a text Sunday and said he wasn't taking this job. They will be looking at some people. There are some applicants that they can fall back on; in the interest of time.

Jim Miller asked that concerning the mountain; he has received good reports on the camera being up and running. There are a lot of comments and they are enjoying that. He reported that the explanation on the blog as to why the trails can't always be groomed has been accepted. People don't understand that you can't groom when it's warm like that because it turns everything into ice. The blog that was put out recently was good knowledge for the public. Jim reported that there has been a number of activities on the mountain for the school district. The Nordic state race was up there a couple weeks ago and the trails were immaculate. He stated that Joe, Marvin, and the crew did a wonderful job of setting tracks and whatnot. People come from all over the state to ski and can't believe the facility that we have up there and the events we put on. Jim stated that a lot of the community helps with these races and there has been great reviews. He thanked Mike and his crew for what they have done. Jim stated that it was a good trial run for the Volta out houses in the maze. The lodge was not open per the district's request because they didn't have anybody to handle it. With no water for the toilets, the toilets that were in the maze were fantastic. Jim stated that he thinks there are some more events coming up. The biathlon has an event coming up in a week or so. The Western Regional National Guard triathlon. They just finished having the vintage snow machine races last weekend. We got a great snowstorm with 15 inches, maybe 12, the trails are in fantastic shape.

Mike Haigler reported that a thank you from Senator Barrasso was given to Joe.

Jim Miller reported that Senator Barrasso was up there to hand out awards to the State winners of the cross-country race. Jim reported that Senator Barrasso gave a speech before he saw what they had up there and was amazed. Maybe there is some funding in his pocket that can help. He stated that he knows letters have been written to him so they will see if he has any of that excess money that can help. He was amazed at what is up there and how it is being used.

Stuart Hill stated that it is a world-class facility up there.

Jim Miller stated that everyone thinks Jackson is the cream of the crop but they come back here and say that we can't even compete with what you guys have and the races that you guys put on are first class. No one really knows what goes on under the radar but the people that are there understand it. Jim stated that hopefully Brook could get a letter from Senator Barrasso.

Stuart Hill asked how the temporary lodging or building worked out for all of that.

Jim Miller replied that the District didn't want to use it because they didn't want to man it. With COVID they just didn't have staff to put in there. People went to their cars.

Stuart Hill asked if it was being used at all.

Mike Haigler responded that no, he doesn't even have an occupancy permit for it yet. They have to look at the plumbing and they can't get into it right now.

Roy Buck commented that one issue that we still have is the parking situation. He stated that the last event he attended was a nightmare with vehicles from the Nordic Center to nearly Beartrap; lining the side of the road. Roy stated that he didn't know if the Sherriff's Department handed out any tickets but they could have handed out hundreds if they wanted to. That is something we are going to have to take care of in the future plans.

Jim Miller commented that that was true. He stated that the Sherriff's Department was up there and announced a number of times to move the cars off the side of the

road. He stated that there was a number of people up there, probably 400 people easily. When you have 200 hundred athletes, you have grandma, mom, pa, kids, coaches, a lot of kids. Parking is a big issue when there is an event.

Stuart Hill replied bravo for running those races and bringing all those people to town and making such a great facility Jim, and the group that was up there helping you.

Jim Miller stated that the Nordic Ski club puts on the race for the district and they are the ones that need the pat on the back. They do a wonderful job. Over 40 volunteers come out.

Stuart Hill asked if anyone knows of any progress on the lodge. He has had a lot of questions about it.

Commissioner Kaufman commented that they have a meeting with the architects. She mentioned that board members obviously attended the user groups and stakeholders meeting, and the price of the facility was quite a bit higher than what anyone really had an appetite for, so they asked the architects to go back and Lyle was able to cut about a million dollars off. She commented that she stated in the last meeting that they were having some conversations with some potential partners and the school district around what a partnership would look like. Commissioner Kaufman reported that she doesn't have anything concrete to share at this point but they're very interested and they understand that they are one of the primary users of that facility. They would like them to weigh in on utility; and how students would flow through and what that means. She stated that it is an exciting opportunity for us as we look to the future of what the facility will be.

Stuart Hill stated that that was fantastic news and parking is a big thing for sure and making a nice square parking lot, so it can be easily maintained. He stated that he doesn't know if they can expand the parking lot they have now to what they were talking about in those drawings but they need to do something up there for parking.

Commissioner Kaufman responded that they do know they need to address parking and one of the things they are talking about from a cost contingency perspective is

that if the building comes in lower than they anticipate then they can make sure that that gets done in phase one as well.

Stuart Hill thanked Commissioner Kaufman for the update. In addition, asked if she had anything else for them.

Commissioner Kaufman replied that it feels good that the parks rules are going to move forward. She informed Mike Haigler that she could ask Natrona County Attorney Eric Nelson to send those out. She has not seen the most updated version either and that would be helpful to the board. She mentioned the roads at Alcova; and since being a Commissioner, she has taken a beating on those roads and that it's great that they are done and to the standards that the users are thrilled. It has been a journey to get here; bravo to Mike for pushing on some of that stuff. It's not always easy but it feels really good to hear that that's done. She reported that she doesn't know what the next step is to get the parks rules out but if they can get that done that would be great.

Stuart Hill stated that it looks like that is in progress. He reported that he took his little car out to the lake and it got right up his road and it was wonderful. He reported that he went through all the bad spots and didn't hit bottom once. He thanked Mike and the Commissioners for making that happen.

VII. Public Comments:

No public comments.

VIII. Board Comments:

Tina Kruse expressed to Roy Buck that it has been a pleasure working with him and he is going to be missed but they hope to see him in a different avenue. Tina stated that she is excited about the mountain; she can't wait to get up there tomorrow and ski a little bit with all the new snow. She stated that she has heard that the plowing on the roads has been great this year. She asked if every campground was going to be reserve-able.

Mike Haigler responded that at Alcova lake it will be Black Beach and Okie, on the mountain it will be every campground. He stated that every site is pretty much a RV site with a picnic table, he stated that he doesn't see that it will be a problem because they never fill up until Beartrap Festival, but when people picnic they use the fire rings the trash. They have never charged for that but now if you want to have a picnic you will have to make the reservation. Mike stated that really, it will be nice because you won't have to rush up there Friday night hoping you can find the spot you want. Once people get used to it they are really going to like the opportunities that go with it.

Jim Miller stated that he is a little frustrated that they are losing Roy and they lost Dave North to the Commissions Board. It seems like they are not getting anyone involved or added on from the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). That's who places new members, with three members it is pretty hard to function as a board. He doesn't know where they are going with it and would like some direction from the BOCC of what their vision is on the mountain. He stated that they have looked at that for years and years. There have been studies on it and so far, they are just doing little bits and pieces. He stated that he thinks they have a gem up there and have had people talking about it. Senator Barrasso just talked about it. He believes they need some more direction or a different vision from the BOCC on what the board does. He stated that Roy and he had a conversation prior to the meeting and he believes there is some frustration going on with the board and what they do. Jim thanked Roy for his years of leadership stating that he did an excellent job. He hates to see him leave but believes his involvement from a different area might be helpful and maybe that's where they all need to attack from, different areas to be more efficient.

Roy Buck stated that it has been a pleasure working with everyone. He stated that they have been through some very trying situations. 2020 was a nightmare and created problems that they never conceived of. It disrupted the operations of the Natrona County Advisory Board as an avenue for people to get their views expressed to the County Commissioners. The primary purpose was sidelined by this process and are struggling to find themselves again because they are still dealing with that situation. Roy stated that he really enjoys working with this group and his passion and why he lives in Casper is because he loves the community. There is no place in

the world that you can go that offers what Casper has to offer. You can enjoy mountains and trees and not have somebody in your back pocket; you can do that in 10 minutes. You can go skiing and they have a world-class facility and nobody knows about it unless you are a member of the Wyoming Nordic community. No one knows about the diamond that we have here and that is an issue. If you want to go swim, or boating, or lay on a beach, we have that too. Everything that you can imagine is here. He stated that the reason he got involved with the board in the first place was to make it better. If you want people to come visit your community and have tourists you have to provide outdoor activities and we have those. He stated that he believes the Advisory Board should be looking at planning, development, and goals; and what it looks like to bring it into the 21st century. Make it accessible to people who are looking for recreation. He stated that his frustration is that they aren't getting there. They don't have a process or a plan in place to look at the vision much less a plan on how to get there. He reported that the reason he is leaving is not that he is mad or frustrated. It's because of things in his personal life that are going to absorb a lot of his time and he won't have the time to commit to things that are important. He stated that he thinks the board is overhauled and he thinks it needs to be revamped. This board needs to be part of the vision process going forward, a part of the planning process, and the funding process. If it doesn't work as an Advisory Board then look at different options, possibly a stationary board. People need outlined and communication avenues need to be outlined and roles defined. He stated that he thinks the Nordic Lodge was an example of where the Natrona County Advisory Board could have been much more of a linchpin part of that process and still should be as far as taking input from the community and funneling that down and giving it to the County Commission. Within the parameters to get all the user groups involved in this project. He reported that he still feels very strongly about this project. The building will be used for half a century. The board should be a big part of that and he doesn't feel that they are. They are underutilized. There are other big projects. They spent a lot of time on rules and regulations and he is happy to hear that they are making progress on that. They have the ability to hold massive events on the mountain, the CNFR brings in five or six hundred people and they could have that four or five times a year utilizing what we have for recreation opportunity. If you don't have parking, bathrooms, ways to feed people, and lodging facilities, good communication and infrastructure, then you can't have that. He stated that they talk about oil and gas and the up's and down's with that; this town could be a tourist

town with conventions and people would stay because there are so many recreational opportunities if they maximize those. He reports that he feels like the Parks Advisory Board should be a bigger part of that going forward. He believes that the leadership, the major players in the community, and funding needs to get together and look at it. Put together a vision and start figuring out what we want this place to look like in 10 years and figure out a way to get there. There are good people on the board and hopefully get some fresh blood in there but it will have to come from the top. He reported that he doesn't want to tell the Board of County Commissioners what to do but there are some decisions to make on how you are going to utilize the County Parks Board. Roy thanked everyone that have been supportive, thanked Mike for doing a tremendous job, and thanked the board members stating that he is not going away that he is just working on other projects right now but his passion is here and he is going to be a part of the process. He would like to help push this through and make this work.

Stuart Hill thanked Roy for all his energy that he has brought to the board. They have been through three Directors. He thanked the board in their faith of him as the Chairman for right now. He asked Jim about the blog that has been out and that it looks like Joe wrote it. He stated that it was great that he got updates. It doesn't have to be professional just give us something on the conditions. He stated that they can expand the blog to more folks. He thanked Joe for the updates and Countie for helping get some things out. He stated that the days of zoom are probably going away and that they are going to get back to being in person again. It's nice to stream it but it would be nice to have a room full of people again. They can then hear what they have to say and then get that to the Board of County Commissioners. He asked Commissioner Kaufman if there had been any responses for volunteers for the boards.

Brook Kaufman replied that she believes that there isn't a person that isn't frustrated with where we are in the process. She stated that she believes the County park system is one of the most important departments that they have at the County and recognizes that she is saying this live over YOUTUBE but thinks there has been a challenge with the directorship and the turnover and they don't move fast enough. This needs to be re-tooled. She doesn't think anyone sitting on the board doesn't feel that way. They have to find a path forward and she hopes to have a conversation

with Mike about that but at the end of the day they have to explore their options because how things have been since she has been the Liaison, are not working which means there is an opportunity to do better. She stated that they hate to lose Roy because he is passionate and great to work with. She thanked him for leading them in hundreds of meetings. She reported that she looks forward to what they can be.

Stuart Hill thanked Commissioner Kaufman.

Roy Buck stated that he has enjoyed working with Commissioner Kaufman, and hopes to continue to do that in the future.

Stuart Hill Stated that everyone on the board are all cheerleaders for the County. They love their County and their community. There is so much more to do and he knows that this is Commissioner Kaufman's job piece and they are with her in celebrating what they can do in the County. He stated that they have an office in the same building and hope they can spend some time and work some of these things out.

IX. Adjournment:

Stuart Hill moved to adjournment. Roy seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned.