

FLORENCE COUNTY FORESTRY & PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING
3:30 P.M. - WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2013
LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM - LOWER LEVEL
FLORENCE NATURAL RESOURCE CENTER
FLORENCE, WI 54121

PRESENT:

SUPERVISOR / CHAIRMAN
SUPERVISOR / VICE CHAIRMAN
SUPERVISOR / COMMITTEE MEMBER
SUPERVISOR / COMMITTEE MEMBER
DNR – COUNTY FOREST LIAISON/STATE LAND FORESTER
FORESTRY & PARKS ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FORESTRY & PARKS BUSINESS MANAGER

ED KELLEY
ED WENGER
LARRY NEUENS
DON GARDNER
HENRY SULLIVAN
ANDREW NAULT
MARY PODNAR

Absent or excused: Harv Skjerven, John Halada, and Pat Smith

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Ed Kelley, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 3:30 P.M.

2. APPROVAL / AGENDA

It was moved by Supervisor Gardner, seconded by Supervisor Neuens, and unanimously carried to approve the agenda as posted.

3. APPROVAL / MINUTES

It was moved by Supervisor Wenger, seconded by Supervisor Gardner, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of November 13, 2013 as read.

4. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

5. AGENCY REPORTS

A. HARV SKJERVEN - USFS DISTRICT RANGER

USFS District Ranger was excused from the meeting. However, Assistant Administrator Andy Nault reported to the committee that the county and US Forest Service are continuing to work on stewardship – but there is nothing new to report at this time.

In regards to the Secured Rural Schools Act (SRS) or 25% fund election, Administrator Smith had a conference call and invited the Florence County School Board President and Superintendent to attend. All federal SRS or 25% fund monies will now go to the school district since the passing of a bill introduced by Representative Mursau. In the past – this money has gone to the local townships. Smith believes that since the school is receiving the funding – the Forestry Committee should not be determining which funding should be taken. He believes that decision should be left up to the school. The school board seems to be more interested in receiving SRS funding as they would be receiving \$90,000 versus \$87,000 if they choose the 25% fund election.

On the other hand, Chairman Kelley believes the decision should remain with the Forestry & Parks Committee. He would like the 25% fund option to be chosen so there would be pressure on the US Forest Service to continue to cut timber and to encourage them to meet their allowable harvest. DNR-County Forest Liaison Forester Henry Sullivan went on to explain the difference between SRS funding and 25% funding to the committee. He said 25% funding is based upon "25% of USFS timber sale revenue" in the county based on a 3 year average and SRS funding is based upon a "formula" designed by the federal government. It was moved by Supervisor Neuens, seconded by Supervisor Gardner, and carried to support the decision being made by the Forestry & Parks committee. The Forestry & Parks chose the SRS \$90,000 option. Chairman Kelley opposed.

B. HUBER & ASSOCIATES

Tony Derleth was not in attendance.

C. DNR – HENRY SULLIVAN

Henry Sullivan, DNR-County Forest Liaison/State Land Forester reported that there are no active sales on state property right now. The plan is to begin working on sale establishment next week.

Sullivan said he met with his supervisor and the endangered resources and wildlife folks to discuss management issues regarding the Spread Eagle Barrens. One of things talked about was the possibility of someone from endangered resources being the property manager of the Barrens versus the wildlife biologist. Sullivan doesn't believe this would happen. It was also discussed at this meeting some of the endangered resource issues the state and county has been having. Dialogue has begun and Sullivan sees this as a step in the right direction.

D. GREG MATZKE – FISHERIES UPDATE

Fishery Biologist Greg Matzke discussed with the committee the new Wisconsin Walleye Initiative process. In the past the guidance was to raise walleye fish to 2" long and stock them in the lakes. The survival rate has never been the very successful. Now there is pressure to improve Northern Wisconsin fishing. The guidance now is to grow these walleyes to 7" – 8" long and then restock into the lakes. They have been given an extra \$626,000 in their budget to raise as many of the big walleyes as possible. Last year Matzke was able to get these fish for stocking Lake Emily, Fay, Keyes and Sea Lion lakes. For next year, Matzke would like to submit stocking for these same four lakes as well as stocking for the Chain, Sand, Halsey, and Cosgrove Lakes. There is no guarantee that these lakes will be able to get stocked – a team of biologists will "rank" them.

Matzke went on to talk about why a lake would or would not be selected to receive these fish. He said one of the major criteria is public access. Matzke believes the potential dredging project on Cosgrove would be necessary for the lake to become a candidate for the state stocking process.

The Wisconsin Walleye Initiative has been advertised in the local Mining News. The public relations department from Madison has also been publicizing it in their outdoor news outlets.

The committee thanked Matzke for reporting this information to them.

6. COUNTY FOREST

A. TIMBER SALE UPDATE

Assistant Administrator Andrew Nault reported to the committee that there are four active timber sales being cut and four sales that are in the process of wrapping up. The crews continue to be busy. He believes the recent cold weather will open up some of the counties swamps to be harvested this year.

The 2014 harvest schedule is proving to be challenging. There are scattered pockets of wood throughout the county,

however, Sullivan and Nault are determined to make it work. Markets continue to look good. Revenues for the year are currently at \$1,098,632.83.

B. ANNUAL WORK PLAN APPROVAL

Nault passed around the 2014 Annual Florence County Forest Work Plan. The work plan must be approved by the County Board before it can be submitted to the DNR. This plan is submitted along with a request for reimbursement for 50% of wages and 40% of 50% of the benefits for the Administrators position. Therefore, it was moved by Supervisor Wenger, seconded by Supervisor Gardner, and unanimously carried to send this plan to the County Board for approval.

7. RECREATION

A. LAKE EMILY LANDING GRANT/ORDINANCE CHANGE - UPDATE

Nothing to report at this time.

B. COSGROVE LAKE DREDGING - UPDATE

The engineering is complete and the application for the permits will be sent in soon.

C. SKI HILL RATES

Both Smith and Ski Hill Manager Rudy Vassar feel the rates should be kept the same as last year. It was requested by Supervisor Neuens that this issue be put on July's agenda for discussion. It was moved by Supervisor Wenger, seconded by Supervisor Gardner, and unanimously carried to keep the rates the same for the 2013/2014 ski season.

8. ADMINISTRATORS REPORT

The hiring of the new forester/recreation coordinator is moving along. Smith will be setting up interviews for the first full week in January. He would like at least two members of the committee to sit on those interviews along with Nault and Sullivan. Supervisor Neuens, Gardner and Wenger volunteered. Nault asked the committee to email Smith to let him know which dates would work into their schedules. Also, Nault brought the applications to the meeting and invited the committee members to rank applications if they so desired.

9. COMMITTEE MEMBER'S COMMENTS & CONCERNS

Supervisor Neuens would like to continue looking into the cutting of trees on county land. He feels if there was a violation – something should be done. Nault reported that he knows Smith was going to investigate – he was just waiting for deer season to be over.

10. BILLS/REVENUES-FORESTRY & PARKS/RESOURCE CENTER

It was recommended that it be brought to the County Boards attention that the revenues brought in on the county forest this year was almost \$1,100,000.00.

Supervisor Neuens questioned the firewood bill. Nault explained that this was actually a very good deal. Typically the county pays \$90/cord for firewood and this time they only paid \$70/cord. This wood is provided at Lake Emily for free as part of the "don't move firewood" campaign.

Neuens also questioned the expenses paid on vehicles. Nault explained that there were a lot of expensive repair that all seemed to happen within the same month.

It was moved by Supervisor Gardner, seconded by Supervisor Neuens, and unanimously carried to approve bills being paid for by the Forestry and Parks and the Florence Natural Resource Center.

11. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Supervisor Neuens, seconded by Supervisor Wenger, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 4:26.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Podnar, Business Manager
Florence County Forestry and Parks