

FLORENCE COUNTY FORESTRY & PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING
3:30 P.M. - WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 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
SUPERVISOR / COMMITTEE MEMBER
DNR – COUNTY FOREST LIAISON/STATE LAND FORESTER
FORESTRY & PARKS ADMINISTRATOR
FORESTRY & PARKS ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FORESTRY & PARKS BUSINESS MANAGER

ED KELLEY
ED WENGER
JOHN HALADA
LARRY NEUENS
DON GARDNER
HENRY SULLIVAN
PATRICK SMITH
ANDREW NAULT
MARY PODNAR

Absent or excused: USFS Representative

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 Neuens, seconded by Supervisor Halada, 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 September 11, 2013 as read.

4. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Administrator Smith read a letter that he received from UW Extension's Meg Dallapiazza thanking the department for their partnership. A flyer was included which showed the good work that the UW Extension has been doing in the community.

A letter was written by eighth grader Eddie Plumley from Iron Mountain asking the department to allow dirt bikes on our trail systems. Administrator Smith discussed the issue with Warden Kelly Crotty and they both felt that trails are not open to dirt bikes because they have no funding system for the maintenance and up-keep of them. Smith will send a letter to the student explaining their reasoning.

Assistant Administrator Nault received an email from Steve Birr who was concerned about the logging roads off of Devil's Run. It was in regards to a piece of road on the railroad grade that was repaired for a 2012 Spring timber sale. This repair gave people drivable access to the area. Birr would like to see a gate installed or large rocks installed to keep ATV's, snowmobiles and motor vehicles from traveling on this area. Nault explained to Birr that the road has always been there – it is just drivable now. Birr asked that his concerns be brought to the Forestry & Parks Committee meeting. After discussion it was decided that this portion of the county forest should remain open to the public.

5. AGENCY REPORTS

A. HARV SKJERVEN - USFS DISTRICT RANGER

There was no representation from the USFS as the department was not working due to the furlough. Administrator Smith did tell the committee that the stewardship meetings have been going well. The stewardship would consist of the USFS setting up a sale, the county taking over the selling and administration of it, and proceeds would then go towards other public works projects. They would try and keep as much money as they can to help mark the next timber sale. However, until a stewardship authorization bill is passed – both parties are at a standstill.

B. HUBER & ASSOCIATES

Tony Derleth was not in attendance.

C. DNR – HENRY SULLIVAN

Henry Sullivan, DNR-County Forest Liaison/State Land Forester passed around the results from the recent State Land Timber sale. Two sales sold and one had no bid. The no bid sale was advertised twice – so the next step is to sell it as a direct sale. Sullivan plans on calling a few logging contractors to see if they are interested in it. Sullivan told the committee that road issues have arisen on the two sales that sold, however the department is working on resolving them.

Other issues with the recent sales include the fact that the state no longer requires a 10% down payment as part of their bidding process. The secretary of the DNR office decided this requirement had been limiting their ability to do business. However, Sullivan is concerned that the integrity of the bidding process will be compromised.

In regards to the management of the Pine-Popple Wild Rivers sale – the state had to limit the cutting period due to the Wood Turtle and American Marten guidelines. Wood Turtle guidelines specify that a contractor cannot harvest 900 feet from a body of water from March 15th – October 31st. The American Marten guideline states that harvesting cannot take place from March 15th – May 31st on property that is a “suitable habitat” for the Marten to live. Sullivan said the entire western half of the county is a suitable habitat. These limitations are going to have an impact on future county timber sales as well.

6. COUNTY FOREST

A. TIMBER SALE HARVEST - UPDATE

Assistant Administrator Andrew Nault reported to the committee that there are four active timber sales in the county right now. He anticipates it will get busier as more sales begin to start up.

B. TIMBER SALES ADVERTISE FOR BID

Nault passed around a Fall 2013 Timber Sale Summary and maps detailing the upcoming Fall timber sales. The six sales will cover 501 acres of county forest. For the year the county has sold 987 acres worth of timber sales – the allowable cut was 974 acres – so it was exceeded slightly. Five of the six upcoming sales will be lump sum. Nault said the county will have the same Wood Turtle issue with their Lake Edith sale. The timber sales will be advertised in the paper the weeks of October 23rd & October 30th. Bid opening is scheduled for November 13, 2013. It was moved by Supervisor Wenger, seconded by Supervisor Gardner, and unanimously carried to support the advertising of the Fall 2013 Timber Sale bids.

C. OCTOBER 16TH TOUR WITH US FOREST SERVICE

Administrator Smith cancelled the US Forest Service tour due to the furlough. Smith said he still had the date open so if the committee wanted a tour of the county – this would be the perfect time. Supervisor Wenger suggested inviting county board members as well.

D. ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR POSITION

Interviews were held on September 23rd for the Assistant Administrator position. It was decided to recommend Andrew Nault to the Personnel Committee. They approved the recommendation and Nault began his new role on Monday, October 7th. The board congratulated Nault on his new position.

E. COUNTY FORESTER POSITION

Personnel gave Smith the permission to advertise for the now vacant Forester position. Smith is holding off on advertising because he may want to make changes to the job description and asked the committee for their support. One thing he had in mind was to try and change this position to a salaried one because he feels this is a professional position which requires a four year degree. The Committee feels that the position should be made so that wages may be adjusted to compare with other similar positions in the state. It was moved by Supervisor Gardener, seconded by Supervisor Halada, and unanimously carried that the Forestry & Parks Committee supports a job description change so it can become a non-union position which will make it a better fit for the role it plays within the department. This decision should be sent to Personnel.

F. BUSINESS MANAGER ONE YEAR EVALUATION

Administrator Smith said that the county has yet to come out with a “formal” job evaluation form – but “informally” Business Manager Mary Podnar has been doing a good job. Everything has been running smoothly and sees no reason for her to still be on probation. Sullivan added that from a DNR viewpoint Podnar has a great attitude and has been very flexible to work with. It was moved by Supervisor Gardener, seconded by Supervisor Halada, and the motion carried to send to Personnel the recommendation that Podnar be taken off probation. Chairman Kelley abstained from the vote.

7. RECREATION

A. LAKE EMILY LANDING GRANT/ORDINANCE CHANGE

Administrator Smith spoke with a representative from Oconto County about charging a fee for boat landing usage. Smith was told that Oconto County generates roughly \$30,000 per year through this ordinance fee. Their ordinance is basic and well written. It talks about the landings they have and the fees that are involved. The sticker they require is placed on the trailer so it stays with the boat and not the vehicle. The fee charged is \$5 per day or \$30 for an annual pass. While Florence County would not generate the same amount of revenue the ordinance is a great example of what to use in Florence County.

Approval for the Lake Emily Landing grant came in the mail this week and the full dollar amount was granted without a \$5,000 deduction as they said would happen if an ordinance fee was not charged. Smith called the DNR to make sure the dollar amount was correct and they admitted they made a mistake with the original grant amount. If the county does not have an ordinance fee in place by the end of the grant, the states reimbursement will be \$5,000 less.

Smith recommended moving ahead with the ordinance for all county owned boat landings that you can back a boat into. He also told the committee that there would be upfront costs such as pay polls, envelopes, stickers, etc. Smith said he would work on a draft that would apply to Florence County and email it out to the committee members before next month’s meeting. This could be approved at the next Forestry meeting with the goal of having a public hearing in December.

B. COSGROVE LAKE DREDGING - UPDATE

Administrator Smith met with Don Augustine, landowner on Cosgrove Lake, to go over the results of a survey that was sent to all Cosgrove Lake landowners regarding the possibility of dredging a channel between Little & Big Cosgrove Lake. Of the 92 surveys that were sent out – 52 responded. There were 28 voting in favor of the project,

26 voting no to the project, and 3 had no opinion either way. Those who were in favor of the project pledged \$5,900 to help cover costs. Engineering and permit applications will be the major up-front costs to get this project started. Smith was encouraged to see that the landowners are willing to support this project financially. Margie Yadro from the Land Conservation Department was in favor of this project and thought she might be able to find funding for parts of it. Smith said the Forestry & Parks department would do as much “in-house” work as possible and had inquired about possibly using a piece of the towns equipment as well.

Supervisor Wenger asked what the results were for creating a Lake Association on Cosgrove. The results of that question were 28 yes, 22 no, 1 wanted to learn more about an association and 1 was not sure.

A landowner on Cosgrove Lake told the committee that he felt there wasn't a “majority in favor” – rather is was more a 50/50 vote. He wanted to know what about those that voted no – do they have a voice? Smith responded that part of his job is to provide public access to lakes and the channel between the two lakes provides a hindrance to that access. Those that voted no were encouraged to attend a permit hearing and express their views. Part of the permit process is to listen to concerns.

Another landowner asked to the committee to investigate the possible public access off of Cecelia Road.

There was concern from a landowner that if you didn't dredge the channel – there would be the risk of this becoming a private lake because the public would have no meaningful access to it.

It was moved by Supervisor Neuens, seconded by Supervisor Wenger, and unanimously carried to move forward with the engineering, assistance with grant writing, and application of permits (*with no expense to the county*) so the process can move forward so the public has a chance to voice their opinions on this issue.

8. ADMINISTRATORS REPORT

Administrator Smith attended a meeting in Rhinelander regarding a court date hearing about the management of National Forest lands. Smith testified at a public hearing about how he would manage National land. He arbitrarily picked a piece of National Forest and wrote a basic management plan on how he would manage it if it were county property. He has since been asked to write a more “in depth” management plan. Supervisor Wenger sat on the panel which heard the testimony. They had two goals: (1) how the county would manage the National Forest to get more wood into the market and (2) how to get the 585 Road in Marquette County where the mine is located straightened. The EPA is fighting this. Wenger said he would report back to the committee the findings of the hearing.

Smith said it has been busy at the office. The remodel job downstairs turned out good and invited the committee members to look at it. Upstairs, people are moving into their new offices.

9. COMMITTEE MEMBER'S COMMENTS & CONCERNS

Chairman Kelley and Supervisor Gardener informed the committee that it was questioned at the Audit and Budget meeting whether or not Smith should have advertised for the basement remodel work. Smith informed the committee that he received three quotes from local contractors and he accepted the lowest quote. The total bill was for \$7,900 and the county is only responsible for paying 1/3 of it because the cost of the remodel is being shared by the USFS and DNR. The bill did get paid.

Supervisor Neuens was asked if a money box could be put by the short rifle range. There are more people using this range so it might be a good idea to have one here.

Homestead Chairperson Elinor Trosin brought to Neuens attention that Fire Tower Road is a town road, ATV trail, and logging road. She asked that Forestry & Parks take a look at it because there are a lot of ruts in it.

Neuens also brought to the attention of the committee that a bill went through that allows the DNR to take the speed limits off of ATV and snowmobile routes in areas where individuals walk or near a home within 150 feet. The speed limit used to be 10 miles per hour and now it is wide open. Neuens would like the county to look into getting a 10 mile per hour speed limit ordinance at these areas. Smith said he will look into this issue.

Neuens also wants the committee to look into applying for grant money to purchase land for county use. Chairman Kelley said there is a resolution on the books that “freezes” the county to owning only 36,000 acres. Smith will ask the county clerk to find that resolution number so it can possibly be rescinded. Smith will also add this issue to next month’s agenda.

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

It was moved by Supervisor Halada, 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 Wenger, seconded by Supervisor Neuens, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 5:30.

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