



BENTON COUNTY Park Board

MEETING MINUTES 9 July 2024

Board Members Present

Dave McNeal, Chair
Robin Emmingham, Vice Chair
Michael LeCompte, Secretary
Frank Cooper
Kit McBurney
Ismael Mendoza-Jimenez

Benton County Employees

Adam Fyall

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call

Dave McNeal, the board Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and the pledge was recited.

Review and Approval of Agenda:

Vice Chair Robin Emmingham introduced a motion to add the garbage situation at Two Rivers Park to the official agenda. The motion was seconded and passed.

Board member Ismael Mendoza asked if his last name could be corrected from Mendez to Mendoza in the June minutes. A motion to approve the June minutes with the spelling correction was introduced, seconded and passed.

Chair Report:

The Chair, Dave McNeal, thanked board member LeCompte for agreeing to serve as Secretary of the Board.

Chair McNeal also thanked Members Emmingham and Mendoza, as well as Mr. Fyall, for kicking off the work of the Staffing Committee and said the board was looking forward to the report.

Chair McNeal went on to thank Member Emmingham for sharing with County Staff his observations about the need to correct the operation situation with trash, fallen trees, and maintenance needs at Two Rivers Park.

Chair McNeal went on to say that the Board is looking forward to progress on the boardwalk project at Two Rivers Park and the parking lot project at Hover Park, including the outreach campaign regarding the placement of boulders to discourage unauthorized offroad vehicle usage.

Chair McNeal then explained that the reports and business agenda would be abbreviated tonight to give the board time to conduct proper interviews with the applicants for the vacant Park Board Member position.

Committee Reports: Staffing Committee

Vice Chair Emmingham spoke about meeting with board member Mendoza and Mr. Fyall last week to compile data on park usage and staffing issues. He spoke of how the acreage of parks has increased, the population has increased, park usage has increased, yet staffing, especially in regards to maintenance has not.

The Staffing Committee intends to continue to work to make the case for more staff at County parks, while figuring out how to pay for the additional employees.

Staff Report: Adam Fyall

Mr. Fyall discussed how the desire to measure actual park use better came out of the first staffing committee meeting and announced that new traffic counters for Horn Rapids, Hover and Two Rivers are being purchased.

Business

Future financing and implementation strategies:

The issue of financing additional staff for park maintenance was discussed.

Vice Chair Emmingham asked about who exactly to address with our park staffing needs and talked about expanding the staffing committee with help from other board members as needed.

Mr. Fyall explained that the best option is to go to the County with a plan, some source of revenue to support additional staffing and expressed that all options for potential revenue should be on the table.

Chair McNeal brought up the idea of approaching outside staff or former board members for help or coordinating with park partners in fundraising efforts.

Board member Mendoza spoke of how the new data being accumulated will justify the need for additional staffing by showing just how much parks are used.

Board member Cooper described how the two main issues are staffing and money, saying the primary issue is money and the need for more staff is there.

Washington Invasive Species Council (WISC) Award Nominations:

Mr. Fyall explained that nominations for three new awards presented by WISC are now open and suggested the board nominate Dave Beach of Friends of Badger Mountain for the “Leadership Award” for his tireless work on behalf of Badger Mountain.

Board Member McBurney introduced a motion to nominate Mr. Beach. The motion was seconded and passed.

Mr. Fyall said that he would work on the nomination application.

Added business item: The garbage situation at Two Rivers Park:

Vice Chair Emmingham spoke of the recent situation involving uncollected garbage at Two Rivers.

On July 5, park staff was off and by July 9 garbage cans were overflowing and trash was not picked up over the weekend either.

Vice Chair Emmingham voiced his concern about what overflowing cans and piled trash does for “Pride in Parks” and suggested the Board send a letter about the situation.

Chair of the Board McNeal asked if the letter should address trash/maintenance at all parks or specifically the trash situation at Two Rivers.

Mr. Fyall suggested that it was time to be direct about the Two River’s problem by generating a letter that included photos of the recent situation.

Board Member Cooper suggested a direct, yet monitored tone be used in the letter because it goes back to the issue of staffing and may not be an issue of negligence.

Vice Chair Emmingham introduced a motion for the board to write a letter to the County Administration, the Fairgrounds, park staff and whoever else needs to be made aware of the trash situation. The motion carried.

Public Comment/Poll of the Board/Adjournment

Public Comment:

Mickie Chamness (Native Plant Society) agreed that Dave Beach is an excellent candidate for a WISC award.

Board member candidate David Cannon brought up the Horn Rapids campground closure and how the Boy Scouts sometimes use it as a backup camping location and was assured that with advanced planning arrangements for groups to camp can usually be made.

Poll of the Board:

Vice Chair Emmingham spoke about how a letter from the board is hopefully at least the beginning of a solution to the garbage problem at Two Rivers.

Board Member McBurney expressed her thanks to Mr. Fyall for his involvement in the trash situation letter and his work in meeting with the staffing committee and said she's excited about the acquisition of more land in August.

Board Member LeCompte agreed that the trash situation was out of hand after seeing it for himself at a recent trip to Two Rivers and expressed his hopes that the letter from the board would at least get a solution in motion.

Board Member Mendoza likes the fact that Two Rivers is getting so much attention and thinks that's a good thing. He also wished Frank Cooper a speedy recovery from illness.

Board Member Cooper said he's looking forward to the letter concerning the garbage at Two Rivers and expressed his excitement for the board candidate interviews.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m. for a short break before interviews with candidates for a vacancy on the board.

Executive Session: Park Board Candidate Interviews:

The board interviewed David Cannon, Drew Tomasino, Gregory Levy and Angela Arrington for a vacant position.

After the interviews the board discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate and agreed that they were all worthy of a spot on the board. After much deliberation the board agreed that Drew Tomasino was the best candidate. The Board then asked Mr. Fyall to submit Mr. Tomasino's name to the County Commissioners for consideration for appointment to the Parks Board.

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