

The regular meeting of the Board of Calhoun County Parks Trustees Board was held on Wednesday, March 2, 2011 at 5:58 p.m. in their office located at 13300 Fifteen Mile Road, Marshall, Michigan.

PRESENT: Commissioner Eric Tobin, Chairman
Commissioner Eric Johnson, Vice Chairman
Commissioner Scott Brown, Member
Commissioner Hugh Coward, Member
Commissioner Christopher Vreeland, Member

ALSO PRESENT: Kevin Henning, Managing Director
Mary Jo Crumpton, Board Clerk
General Public

Chairman Tobin called the regular meeting of the Calhoun County Parks Trustees Board to order at 5:58 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Brown and supported by Commissioner Johnson to approve the February 2, 2011 regular meeting minutes. Voice vote: Motion carried.

CALHOUN COUNTY TRAILWAY DISCUSSION

Chairman Tobin stated that this would be an open discussion and question and answer period with the Parks Trustees. Commissioner Vreeland noted that Mr. Funke will be present to give a recap of his talk that he gave a few weeks ago at the Ott Preserve.

Mr. Tom Garnett, Calhoun County Trailway Alliance (CCTA), provided copies of the Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance "The Great Lake-to-Lake Trails" which shows the significance of the Calhoun County Trailway in the route from South Haven to Port Huron. Commissioner Brown asked about the timelines for the proposed trails in other counties within this route. Mr. Garnett responded that they are all being actively worked on but are in different stages. He added that 54% of the shore-to-shore trail is complete and being used. Tim Stewart, Hurley & Stewart Engineers, stated that they are designing the four segments of the Kalamazoo River Valley trail and gave an update on the progress.

Mr. Garnett gave a brief history on the trailway and noted that in 2003, a group of folks were invited to the table when the Master Plan was being developed. Over a two-year time period, there was adequate opportunity for anyone with an interest in the Master Plan to participate. In this Master Plan, the trailway was planned through the Ott Preserve. The intent of the trailway was not only to link the cities of Battle Creek, Marshall, and Albion, but also the county parks. In the spring of 2010, the Trailway Alliance met with two members of the "Friends of the Ott Preserve" who expressed their opposition to the trailway in the Ott Preserve. Since then there has been an enormous amount of misinformation and public outcry regarding the trailway and Mr. Garnett expressed his frustration with this since up to now there has been plenty of time for people to voice their concerns.

An alternate route through the Consumers Energy right-of-way has been suggested, but there are challenges associated with this route and it has not been approved by the DNRE. Mr. Garnett added that the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners is the ultimate decision-maker on the trailway.

Mr. Doug Sophia, current president of the "Friends of the Ott Preserve", provided a letter that was written in 2005 "supporting the concept behind the county-wide trail system." The letter further stated that while they supported the notion of the trail traversing the Ott, the integrity and character of this unique property was their first priority and "paving throughout the interior of the property would be unacceptable". Mr. Sophia stated that the "Friends..." never received any notification of the trailway going through the Ott. He added that a trailway would be invasive and encouraged finding another route around the Ott. It was noted by some present that this issue seems to be a moving target as the letter provided by Mr. Sophia stated support of the trailway through the Ott Preserve; however, now it is not supported in any form. Discussion continued on the history of

the Ott Preserve, the appointment of the "Friends..." by the County Board as an advisory group, and the current status of the "Friends...".

Mr. Jim Coury, CCTA, explained that the idea has always been to link the parks and provide a trailway for multi-uses. All over the country, people are linking parks and trailways.

It was clarified that the County Board approved the DNRE grant application that was submitted by the Trailway Alliance. Transportation Enhancement Grant funds have also been secured for the trailway. County Commissioner Art Kale asked what the impact would be if the trailway did not go through the Ott Preserve. Staff responded that it is possible that both grants (DNRE and Transportation Enhancement) would be lost, totaling approximately \$1.6 million. County Commissioner Kale stated that a Town Hall meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 17, 2011 at 5:30 p.m. at the County (prior to the County Board meeting) and the Board will be voting on whether or not to move forward with the trail project at their April 7th meeting.

Mr. Tom Funke provided information on his background and gave a recap on the recent walk-through in the Ott Preserve. He stated that he is representing the land and the intention of the donors. From the research he has conducted, he represents the position that the Ott Biological Preserve is not a park and the trail as currently proposed would change the geology and natural character of this preserve. Discussion continued.

Mr. James Barry, Marshall resident, stated that he enjoys the boardwalk in Marshall and enjoys the Ott Preserve, but stated that it is not a recreational area. He believes there will be significant changes to the eskers if a bike trail is built and the natural progression should be through Consumers' right-of-way.

Mrs. Sophia stated her opposition to the trailway through the Ott Preserve and what she is calling a trail to nowhere. She agrees that there is an alternate route through Consumers' right-of-way that would take the trail through a neighborhood, increasing the use of it.

With no further comments, Chairman Tobin closed the discussion at 7:53 p.m.

COMMUNICATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

Mrs. Crumpton read the communications as follows:

- a) Received the Environmental Services Coordinator's Report

SUPERVISOR AND PUBLIC OFFICIAL COMMENTS

County Commissioner Julie Camp thanked everyone for their input and discussion on the trailway.

COMMISSIONER TIME

Commissioner Vreeland thanked everyone for their participation in the discussion and noted that there is a lot of misinformation out there to the general public.

Commissioner Coward thanked everyone for attending and noted there was good information shared tonight that should have been brought out earlier in the process.

Commissioner Johnson commented that he is the new guy and is learning a lot.

Commissioner Tobin thanked everyone for the good discussion. He commented that he has reviewed a lot of information and still personally supports the trailway moving through the Ott Preserve.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next regular meeting of the Calhoun County Parks Trustees Board will be held on Wednesday, April 6, 2011 at 6:00 p.m. or following the Board of Calhoun County Road Commissioners meeting.

There being no additional business before the Board, Chairman Tobin adjourned the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mary Jo Crumpton, Board Clerk

Eric J. Tobin, Chairman