

Kosciusko County Parks & Recreation Board

Thursday, August 18th, 2022

The Kosciusko County Parks & Recreation Board met at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 18th 2022, in the Old Courtroom, Kosciusko County Courthouse for their first meeting. Members present included: Rob Bishop, Mike Cusick, Matt Metzger, Aggie Sweeney and Troy Turley.

Also present for the meeting was County Auditor Michelle Puckett, who called the meeting to order pending oath of office and election of board officers.

IN THE MATTER OF BOARD MEMBERS -OATH OF OFFICE:

County Auditor, Michelle Puckett, swore in the following board members of the Kosciusko County Parks & Recreation Board for 2022:

- ❖ Rob Bishop
- ❖ Mike Cusick
- ❖ Matt Metzger
- ❖ Aggie Sweeney
- ❖ Troy Turley

IN THE MATTER OF ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS:

Auditor Puckett provided information to the board based on Indiana Code: 36-10-3-8 in which the election of board officers will be chosen on an annual basis. With this being the first official meeting for the Parks & Recreation Board; a president and vice president will be elected where they will fulfill that duty for the remainder of 2022. New officers will be selected each year at the first meeting in January. The Auditor will serve as the board secretary according to County Ordinance 22-5-10-1.

Puckett opened the floor for nominations of President of the board; where Rob Bishop was nominated to serve as board President. With no further nominations for President; the floor was closed for nominations.

Motion: Mike Cusick
Second: Matt Metzger
Ayes: 5 Nays: 0
Motion Carried

To: Elect Rob Bishop to serve as Board President for the remainder of the 2022 term.

Puckett then opened the floor for nominations of Vice President of the board; where Troy Turley was nominated to serve as Vice President. With no further nominations for Vice President the floor was closed for nominations.

Motion: Aggie Sweeney
Second: Matt Metzger
Ayes: 5 Nays: 0
Motion Carried

To: Elect Troy Turley to serve as Board Vice President for the remainder of the 2022 term.

IN THE MATTER OF INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION:

Auditor Puckett opened an introductory discussion with the board which included the following:

- Advised of items she distributed to each member including the Indiana Code, County Ordinance and the State Board of Accounts regulations on how the Parks & Recreation Board is to operate
- The Auditor will handle all money on behalf of the board as she is bonded to do so; using the counties accounting software which is approved by the Indiana State Board of Accounts
- The board will need to prepare and submit an annual budget in which the Auditor will assist with the process
- Claims for expenditures must be signed by both the board President & Vice President and will then be processed by the Counties established claims process
- A non-reverting donation fund has been created for the board
- Kosciusko County Community Foundation has donated \$7,600.00 which has been earmarked to support the master parks and trails plan
- An annual report is required to be provided to the Council & Commissioners on the operations of the board and the status of any programs
- The board is required to meet on a quarterly basis as a minimum. The board has agreed to meet monthly; which will occur the third Thursday of each month

The following secretarial responsibilities will be performed by the Auditor:

- Attend each meeting
- Advertise and post meeting dates
- Prepare the agenda and distribute meeting material
- Prepare the minutes of each meeting
- Manage the Parks & Recreation Board page on the County website which will include meeting dates, agendas, meeting minutes and Board Member names

A brief discussion ensued in which the board agreed to list Auditor Michelle Puckett on the county website as the boards first point of contact. The board would also like to inquire on a general email address to be used; in which the Auditor will look into with the Counties IT department.

Puckett responded to an inquiry of member Mike Cusick, stating the board is an “official board”, and they are subject to the open-door law. The board meets as a whole for discussion and decision making, but is not allowed to meet outside of a public advertised meeting to do the same. No more than two members can meet outside of public forum to make decisions going forward.

IN THE MATTER OF INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Cary Groninger welcomed the board and thanked the members for serving. He opened an introductory discussion which included the following:

- A brief background of establishing a parks & recreation board was provided, stating hometown chats rolled into a comprehensive plan and Forward Kosciusko in order to find better recreation in the county
- Several funding opportunities are available with a primary focus on establishing a Master Parks Plan and Master Trail Plan
- Both Commissioners and Council are supportive of the new board's efforts.
- Recommended looking at how to obtain more connectivity to the assets the county already has.
- Advised a 2023 budget has been prepared and can be further discussed
- Project plans can be brought before the Commissioners to distinguish eligibility and availability of grant opportunities
- Recommended contacting the counties Community Coordinator, Amy Roe for HELP (Grant) Program assistance
- Groninger provided the board with community resources such as (Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) where the county has an annual membership and would be helpful from a grant funding aspect. Also, the counties GIS Coordinator, Bill Holder, would be a great option for mapping assistance
- The goal is to create a County that our community wants to live in!

IN THE MATTER OF MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT:

Board Members held a brief discussion on meeting protocol with the possibility of expanding meeting times, as well as creating subcommittees. The board discussed inviting MACOG to their next meeting to obtain information and guidance on creating their Master Plan. In addition, the board agreed to invite other associates such as Amy Roe, Community Coordinator/ HELP and members of the Ride+Walk program to the September meeting.

Member Aggie Sweeney advised according to DNR information and the five year master plan; in order to be eligible for grant funding in 2023 an early plan would need to be completed by November 15th, 2022. Further discussion is needed in order to anticipate if the deadline can be met.

The following topics were discussed and will require further consideration:

- Land access and issues
- Future US 30 changes

Member Mike Cusick advised the Ride+Walk Committee has requested a Kosciusko County Parks & Recreation Board member to serve as a member on their board. Member Matt Metzger stated he is currently a Ride+Walk member and will verify the member representation criteria.

IN THE MATTER OF SUBCOMMITTEES:

In order to coordinate efforts of the master plan, the board held a discussion to form the following subcommittees:

- DNR Subcommittee: Mike Cusick & Aggie Sweeney
- MACOG Subcommittee: Rob Bishop & Troy Turley
- RIDE+WALK Subcommittee: Matt Metzger

In closing, Board President Rob Bishop stated he will be in contact with the various communities' parks board chairmen, to invite them to attend the September meeting. Bishop inquired about the board receiving donations with Puckett advising when donations are made for a specific project; the project will need prior approval by the Commissioners and Council and then the dollars may be accepted.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**Kosciusko County Parks & Recreation Board
Courthouse, Old Courtroom
Thursday, September 15th, 2022**

The Kosciusko County Parks & Recreation Board met at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 15, 2022, in the Old Courtroom, Kosciusko County Courthouse. Members present included: Rob Bishop, Mike Cusick, Matt Metzger, Aggie Sweeney, and Troy Turley.

Rob Bishop called the meeting to order.

IN THE MATTER OF APPROVAL OF 8-18-22 MINUTES:

Motion: Aggie Sweeney	To: Approve the 8-18-22 minutes as
Second: Mike Cusick	presented.
Ayes: 5	Nays: 0
Motion Carried	

IN THE MATTER OF MACOG MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENTS:

Donnie Ritsema, Senior Community Development Planner at MACOG, presented the Five-Year Parks Master Plan for the Parks & Recreation Board, focusing on several building objectives through Gap Analysis, Benchmark Studies, Public Engagement, and Stakeholders-including creating a steering committee.

- **James Turnwald, Executive Director of MACOG**, presented:

- an overview of the organization and the timeline and processes to come
 - organize structure within the board
 - compose a mission statement
 - process data/public input and analysis
 - prioritize goals and finally reach approval
 - 1st draft due November 15th, 2022
 - final plan due April 15th, 2023
 - MACOG- to offer plan at zero dollars
 - act as Parks & Recreation Board's staff
 - help with writing the plan on their behalf
 - maintaining the integrity of 30-year plan goals alongside the five-year master plan
 - Forward Kosciusko brand and Marshall County Master Plans- references for creating vision
 - advised to stay unified in their vision
 - redirected from a focus on long-term goals to low-hanging fruit
 - Indiana Trails Fund- due in March-only up for availability once every two years
 - agreed to go after deadline for funding
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- brainstormed people/organizations to bring expertise to committee:
 - K-21 Health Foundation, Kosciusko County Visitors Bureau, Kosciusko County Chamber of Commerce, Parkview Warsaw, Lutheran Kosciusko Hospital, Matt Sandy from Area Plan, Ride Walk, Kosciusko County Velo, The Watershed Foundation, Lilly Center for Lakes & Streams, YMCA, Richard Haddad, Jody Claypool, Tom Wogoman, Alan Tio, and our local parks
 - meeting once a month is more than sufficient to achieve the deadlines
 - leadership committee should be created versus a single point contact option between the board and MACOG

Motion: Troy Turley

Second: Matt Metzger

Ayes: 5 Nays: 0

Motion Carried

To: Approve accepting the most recent copy of the MACOG drafted Master Plan.

IN THE MATTER OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

- **Cori Humes, Kosciusko County Visitors Bureau Director**, presented her resources to the Parks & Recreation Board and the MACOG initiative:
 - existing resources which highlight trails, work, and play opportunities
 - brochures, websites, and pamphlets all showcase blue spaces with public access points, current trails, amenities, wild spaces/nature preserves, and parks
 - consider a higher level of usage- plans will pull in other county populations
- **Greg Demopoulos, Kosciusko County Velo Cycling Club Co-Founder and Board Member**, advocated for trails:

- Winona Lake's Trails Plan-valuable reading asset
- recommended the creation of a transportation plan alongside the master plan
- vet smaller community plans through MACOG to come alongside master plan for quickly achieving common goals and low-hanging fruit
- Dustin New, Active Transportation Planner of MACOG- excellent resource for connecting project dots
- **Holly Hummitch, Parks Department/Senior Center Director at Town of Winona Lake** offers:
 - Christy Myers-Winona Lake Park Board President, as resource
 - Winona Lake Park Department- conservation grant totaling \$500,000.00
 - experience in plan creation/approval process
 - Craig Allebach-Winona Lake trails resource
- **Jody Claypool, co-founder of Tippy River Adventures**, relayed a desire to make the Tippecanoe River a more prevalent blue-way opportunity within Kosciusko County.
 - trails to cross river
 - crafting maintenance access points
 - access to other bodies of water that branch with the Tippecanoe River
 - encouraged legislation to designate Tippecanoe River as Navigable
- **Irlene Yentes, Executive Director for Syracuse Wawasee Trails**, presented
 - organization's 20 years of experience
 - just over 12 miles of trails
 - resource to the Parks & Recreation Board through collaboration and connectivity
 - current goal to connect the two towns of North Webster and Syracuse- possible project connection point
 - Dan Thystrup-a resource for this section of the county
- **Amy Roe, Kosciusko County Coordinator**, presented with regards to
 - HELP Program/ARPA: available funds and projects for Parks & Recreation Board
 - Amy Roe- offers ambiguity and flexibility to the board's initiatives
 - HELP, OKRA, & MACOG- all resources
 - Jennifer Stewart, K-21 Health Foundation- a resource
 - lists of projects available to the Parks & Recreation Board from the HELP initiative
 - **Trails**- applicable HELP Program project
 - **Area of Focus**- applicable HELP Program project
 - **Quality of Place**- two applicable HELP Program projects
 - **Community Wellness**- one applicable HELP Program project
 - Etna Green, Mentone, Milford, Burkett/Palestine, and Sidney: participating communities in the HELP Program
 - Warsaw/Winona Lake- do not meet requirements

- Two Project Worksheets to be filled out by October 1st, 2022 for HELP funding

Additional next steps were discussed regarding creating an oversight committee, who would be tasked with filling out the worksheets. Finally, all would continue the partnership journey to reach funding and grant processes. A motion was made to appoint Mike Cusick and Aggie Sweeney to represent the Parks & Recreation Board. They were tasked with completing the necessary HELP applications/worksheets.

Motion: Mike Cusick
Second: Aggie Sweeney
Ayes: 5 Nays: 0
Motion Carried

To: Approve appointing Mike Cusick & Aggie Sweeney to represent the Parks & Recreation Board in completing the necessary HELP Project worksheets as presented.

IN THE MATTER OF STEERING SUBCOMMITTEE:

Discussion was held on creating a steering subcommittee in order to reach out to organizations who are possibly willing to attend a meeting. Board President Bishop proposed the steering subcommittee consist of Troy Turley and Matt Metzger.

Motion: Matt Metzger
Second: Mike Cusick
Ayes: 5 Nays: 0
Motion Carried

To: Approve creating a steering subcommittee consisting of Matt Metzger and Troy Turley; to reach out to organizations willing to attend a meeting.

IN THE MATTER OF THE DNR SUBCOMMITTEE:

Aggie and Mike presented documentation of their research on grant funding sources. Two DNR grants which stood out for being most specific to where they anticipate going was the Indiana Trails Program & The Land and Water Conservation Fund. While reviewing other master plans and other funding sources that different organizations have gone after and or received, was insightful. Private funding is always a possibility.

IN THE MATTER OF FURTHER BUSINESS:

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**Kosciusko County Parks & Recreation Board
Courthouse, Old Courtroom
Thursday, October 20, 2022**

The Kosciusko County Parks & Recreation Board met at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 20, 2022, in the Old Courtroom, Kosciusko County Courthouse. Members present included: Rob Bishop, Mike Cusick, Matt Metzger, Aggie Sweeney, and Troy Turley.

Rob Bishop called the meeting to order.

IN THE MATTER OF APPROVAL OF 9-15-22 MINUTES:

Motion: Aggie Sweeney

To: Approve the 9-15-22 minutes as presented.

Second: Mike Cusick

Ayes: 5 Nays: 0

Motion Carried

IN THE MATTER OF JOINT MEETING WITH MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE:

Donald Ritsema, MACOG Senior Community Development Planner, presented a timeline of November 15th, 2022, for the 1st draft of the worksheets. Activities will be conducted today for vision and mission statement inputs. A review was given of the schedule and processes, including monthly meetings held from now until March. April's meeting is projected to be a presentation of the final draft. The current meeting will count as a public input activity.

IN THE MATTER OF HELP PROJECT WORKSHEETS UPDATE:

Discussion was held regarding the criteria for the worksheets presented to the board, which were also presented as completed per County Commissioners request.

- 1st worksheet: Extension on Chinworth Trail-to extend three quarters of a mile from Chinworth Bridge to Crazy Eggs
- 2nd worksheet: to create a master plan for blueways and greenways, which will allow a more specific plan
- 3rd worksheet: project not yet an identified site, but to be near James Lake to allow non-motorized access

IN THE MATTER OF INDIANA PARKS AND RECREATION CONFERENCE DISCUSSION:

Discussion was held regarding the funding and attendance of a state-held Parks and Recreation board conference, which will be held in late November. The board believes it would be important to bring everyone up to speed at the state level, and to incorporate this additional resource. There are fees to belong and attend, plus additional costs associated with gas and lodging. The board may seek out funding opportunities for the conference, although it may be of too short notice. Initial grant money, which has already been received, must not go towards this project. Troy volunteered to attend the conference on November 16th, and will attempt to have the fees waived. In the case that the fees cannot be waived, he volunteered to talk with Commissioner Groninger regarding additional funding opportunities. He is to report back to the board on this matter. Mike also volunteered to attend, if a more economical approach for attendance was found. Next meeting's date will not be altered.

IN THE MATTER OF JOINT MEETING WITH MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE CONTINUATION:

Introductions of the board and committee were made, followed by vision and mission statement exercises. The entire group found common themes, and Mike Cusick facilitated further

discussion. While the vision statement was considered completed, the mission statement will be worked further.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

**Kosciusko County Parks & Recreation Board
Courthouse, Old Courtroom
Thursday, November 17, 2022**

The Kosciusko County Parks & Recreation Board met at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 17, 2022, in the Old Courtroom, Kosciusko County Courthouse. Members present included: Rob Bishop, Mike Cusick, Matt Metzger, Aggie Sweeney, and Troy Turley.

Rob Bishop called the meeting to order.

IN THE MATTER OF APPROVAL OF 10-20-22 MINUTES:

Motion: Aggie Sweeney

To: Approve the 10-20-22 minutes as presented.

Second: Mike Cusick

Ayes: 5 Nays: 0

Motion Carried

IN THE MATTER OF 2023 MEETING DATES:

Rob Bishop, President, presented the 2023 Meeting Dates. There was discussion regarding quorum and guided procedures for the possible alteration of future meetings. The meeting dates were verbally approved as a whole.

IN THE MATTER OF STATE PARKS & RECREATION CONVENTION:

Mike Cusick, Parks & Recreation Member, presented that both he and Troy attended the State Parks & Recreation Conference. They targeted yesterday for relative content and found the sessions to be valuable, and the expo, helpful. They were able to make several key contacts and connections regarding construction companies and playground equipment resources.

Mike challenged the group to seek out additional public input, based on the feedback received from the conference. He also encouraged representation of the entire county through the proper levels of public input. Troy Turley presented that they received an outline overview of the complex TIF process, and thanked everyone who allowed them to attend and serve on behalf of the Parks & Recreation Board of Kosciusko County. The group agreed that two to three members should attend next year's conference.

IN THE MATTER OF PARKS MASTER PLAN:

Donny Ritsema, MACOG Senior Community Development Planner, presented an exercise for the Parks Master Plan, stating that previous efforts, such as the 2019 hometown chats, HELP initiative, and Forward Kosciusko, have all laid down a foundation for the planning of our

county's parks and recreation activities. They have also shown a desire, from the residents, for more travel connections and park spaces. The additional planned survey will hopefully gather a more detailed picture.

Discussion was held regarding future amenities, that would encourage residents and tourists to stay and enjoy our area during the winter months. The group also confirmed that there would be opportunities, if need be, to fix the 5-year plan after submission. They also decided to host three in-person meetings, to gather additional public feedback. The focus of these meetings would be on our three county regions: Northern, Central, and Southern Kosciusko.

The following goals were developed for the master plan.

- Route from Warsaw to Pumpkin Vine to the Nickle Plate, near Rochester
 - connect regionally
 - would provide a bike path almost to Indianapolis
- Using Old 30 as a regional connection from Bourbon to Etna Green
- Connecting Syracuse and North Webster
- Connecting Winona Lake to North Webster & Syracuse
- Connect CCAC to Mentone
- Blueway for Tippe
 - alongside a linear greenway for access, recreation, and transportation
 - avoid two end points but create a web of connection
 - Pumpkin Vine and CCAC
- Drop-in locations to be close to already existing trails
 - create areas for central parking which can be biked or canoed from
- Kayak rental options
 - public would not have to own the equipment, but could rent for a small fee
 - canoe or bike down to Indianapolis
- Webbed connection from South of Tippe along Chinworth
- Camping sites, with porta pits, along the open areas
 - primitive three-sided shelters
- Hastings does not have any existing opportunities and would benefit greatly from any from possible projects
- Linear park systems
- Greenway would be a safe transportation system for our many cyclists living just south of Nappanee
- Connecting Chinworth area to Nappanee or closer to Route 30
- Connect the population centers of Kosciusko County
- Although Nappanee is not in Kosciusko County, our communities intertwine
- Mentone/Claypool/Silver Lake all have just one to two parks and a nature preserve. More opportunities for the residents here, are needed.
- Sidney to Silver Lake

They desire to connect all projects in a web pattern throughout the county. An additional goal is to change our community's way of life, through safer transportation routes for those biking/walking to and from work. There is an opportunity for our county, regarding a new

national coast-to-coast trail. While Kosciusko is not currently on the list of counties which the trail will be going through, we could possibly be a part of connection through lobbying efforts.

An exercise was conducted regarding obstacles the plan may face, financially and logistically.

IN THE MATTER OF FURTHER BUSINESS:

Discussion was held regarding final confirmation of the draft vision and mission statements. The group would like the ability to revisit both, in the future. There was an approved change made to the mission statement from the word spaces to opportunities.

There was further discussion regarding Propel US 30. They are interested in working with the Parks and Recreation Board, through attending meetings. They would like to ensure everyone is in alignment to both parties needs.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.