

## Starke County Park Board Minutes – 12/16/14

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Board Attendance: Marcia Bedrock, Debbie Mix, Rosemary Rose, Skyler Ellinger.  
Absent: Mike Meadows

Call to Order at 6:00pm at the County Annex Building

Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes were not read. Mr. Ellinger made a motion to accept the minutes as emailed and the motion was seconded by Rosie Rose. A vote was taken and the motioned was carried.

Ms. Bedrock announced that Mike Meadows has resigned due to health reasons and Judge Kim Hall will notify her when a new board member is appointed. Debbie noted that the use of the word "camper" has created a problem. The term is used to mean both vehicles and the persons and that has created many misunderstandings. It was asked if we could define our words more clearly to prevent further misunderstanding. When we mean the vehicle, it would be helpful to use the term "RV", and when we mean people, we use "campers". The board agreed to do so.

Ms. Bedrock went to the Commissioner's meeting and was told that the RV's must be removed when the campground closes. She asked why and was told by the county attorney, Mr. Lucas, that it was a zoning issue. The property is zoned R-2 residential. The Commissioners explained that when the park is closed, RV's need to go and then return in the Spring because that means the campground is being used as storage and storage is not allowed with the zoning of the area. Mr. Lucas also brought up that it is also a liability issue. Marcia explained that everyone should have their insurance and that won't be an issue as long as the campground have provided proof of such. The Commissioners stated the board is a legally formed board, so we can make that decision and Mr. Lucas noted there is an argument for both sides of the issue.

Questions were entertained from the audience. There is no ordinance that no storage is allowed in that area. Most homes store boats and RV's on their property. If zoning was an issue, that can be addressed, but it doesn't seem as if it is, since there are restaurants and storage facilities already at the lake. No one is living in the RV's.

Mr. Wallsmith stated that prior minutes will show that commissioners have allowed RV's there year-round. There is no prohibition for year-round camping, but no water and restrooms are available in the winter, which is why the campground is closed. There are no permanent tie-downs for RV's or in other areas. Everything campers have at the campground is mobile, not permanent. Mr. Wallsmith noted the park board should check to be sure our actions are covered by County liability insurance. When we have the power to make decisions, we have to be responsible for the decisions we make.

The questions was asked if we are looking for a motion, or are we seeking more information and it was noted that we are looking for a motion to determine the issue of leaving RV's at the campground during the winter. Ms. Mix made a motion to allow RV's in the campground within the rules and regulations of the lessee (Mr. Callahan) and the motion was seconded by Ms. Rose. Discussion followed. Will this motion

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affect all campgrounds or just Bass Lake? Based on the lease and understanding of the zoning of the surrounding area, there is no reason to deny based on it being a zoning issue. The motion was called to question. A vote was taken and there were 3 yes and one no. The motion carried.

Mr. Wallsmith went through the individual issues that were noted in the last inspection report and gave a response to them all. It was agreed that the board will visit the campground in the Spring.

Mr. Bruce Wakeland, forester of the Starke County Forest, made a presentation on the forest, providing history and explained why there is an important difference of it being a forest rather than a park. He talked about the ecological aspects of the forest.

Mr. Wakeland provided a few points that he wanted from the Park Board:

1. Fund Requisition. He needed to figure out how to withdraw money from the County. Does he go through the Park Board or through the Auditor's Office? We need to get a procedure down. However, after explaining what he wanted to withdraw the money for, the board directed him to include the receipts he has and fill out the voucher using the fund# at the Auditor's office for reimbursement. The Commissioners need to approve the voucher. We will get back to him once we have a definite procedure in place.
2. Promotion – he's like to find out how the county can help promote the forest so more visitors can enjoy it. He would like to give a picnic or something to get people exposed to the forest.
3. Trails need to be mowed about 3 times a year and there is also maintenance that's needed on the trails.
4. At some point, someone is needed to undo the beaver's nightly work. That will mean hiring someone to go there daily to undo do the beaver dams.

More immediately he would like the Park Board to help promote the Forest and to schedule a tour of the forest for the Board members in both the winter and the summer.

After discussion, the board may want to have one board member as a liaison for the forest and one for the Bass Lake Beach and Campground.

A motion to adjourn was made by Rosie Rose and seconded by Skyler Ellinger. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:45pm.

Respectfully submitted by D. Mix, secretary.