

Starke County Park Board  
June 10, 2025  
Meeting Minutes

Present: R. Ballard, T. Busch, S. Byer, D. Sinn, & T. Trout

R. Ballard called meeting to order.

S. Byer made the motion to accept the minutes of the April 8, 2025 meeting, T. Busch seconded. Passed 5-0.

B. Wakeland discussed several topics regarding the Starke County Forest. He noted that Art at the Forest was a success, 12 plein air painters participated, and a minimum of 60 people attended the event.

He discussed the mowing of the trails at the forest. This is the first year we have hired anyone to help with mowing, as Bruce has always done it himself. We are employing Two Brothers Tree Service to mow the trails, this company was preferred by Bruce for their knowledge of both trees and lawn care, and having proper equipment. He wants a contract between the county and Two Brothers that states what they will be doing, and that they would not be responsible for work beyond the normal expectations for lawn care; for example, the lawn care business would not be expected to clean up storm damage while mowing for their regular price. He would like the contract to specify that the trails will be mowed 5 times a year. Bruce said we will use this year as a template for the mowing schedule for coming years.

Also, Bruce discussed the use of bicycles at the Forest. He said it was up to the park board, but he preferred no bicycles on the trails of the forest due to erosion and safety concerns for the hikers. So, we will continue with hiking only on the trails. Bruce said that the bike rack that was at the Forest has recently been stolen and would like to see us get another bike rack. T. Busch said he agreed that we need a bike rack for out there, particularly if they are not allowed on the trails. T. Busch made a motion to not allow bicycles or any other vehicle on the trails of the Starke County Forest. S. Byer seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0. An audience member had a suggestion to update the Starke County Parks website with the address of the Starke County Forest, as she had trouble locating it when she was looking to visit.

Bass Lake Beach and Campground Renovation Update—A. Flora discussed the progress of the renovation. The camp restrooms/showers are behind schedule. They have not opened up as of yet, and this is cause for aggravation for seasonal and weekend campers alike. The water and plumbing are working well, the wait on bathrooms is due to a delay in partitions and other hardware. A. Flora shared that she has been corresponding with both Troyer Group and Brown and Brown to get the bathrooms completed as a priority.

Campground and pier slip availability update—two seasonal spots are currently available, with one being looked at this week, and will most likely be rented. This was done without

advertising. Last year we had 5 nightly rental spots, this year we added 3, totaling 8 weekend spots. Mike's Electric is going to electrify two of the primitive tent sites (sites 7 & 8) giving us a total of 4 electric sites. Discussed pavilion renting; it costs \$100 for the day, all the party enters the beach for free. A. Flora said she hopes to get a concrete floor in what is called the "south" pavilion for next year and that pavilion rental is popular. Also, as of now, we have 10 empty pier spots. K. Berry and T. Bowser brought up the question of if they pavilions were also getting new metal roofs. A. Flora stated she did not get quotes on the pavilion roofs because they are fairly new, but after the roof quote was secured, a storm blew some shingles off the "north" pavilion. T. Busch suggested that might be looked at towards the end of the renovation if there is money left over.

2026 Budget discussion—A. Flora shared her notes for how she arrived at totals for the 2026 budget hearings. She did not include asking for a 3% raise for the superintendent salary, but will add it before the hearing. She is asking for a raise for the "camp host/groundskeeper" position from \$15.65 to \$18.00 per hour, asking for a raise for "harbor master" and "custodian" from \$15.65 to \$16. Further discussion was held about the proposals to the budget. T. Busch volunteered to attend the budget hearing with Superintendent Flora. T. Trout suggested we should increase the postage due to the rising cost of stamps. The board agreed.

#### Superintendent's Report:

Art At the Forest—big success

Staylist Reservation website—almost finished; will probably be launched by July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend. \$1500-one time fee

Claire Miller of BEVY will be launching her coffee cart on July 4.

TENATIVE ribbon cutting date for Bass Lake Beach House is July 19. 10-56 will be there on July 19 from noon to 2 either way.

Many beach passes have sold.

Water bacterial test came back good; that has to be done once a month

Really want to thank: BEV AND GARY; also RICK GREEN, RICK YOVER, AND JIMI KUSSEY; AND LISA SCHOON FOR HER SUPPORT

#### Other business-

T. Bowser asked if the beach and camp gatehouses are getting new windows. A. Flora said she would verify and let everyone know.

D. Binkley asked about the drainage on the concrete handicap parking areas. He said people have alerted him to the fact they aren't draining, particularly on the "south" side slab. T. Bowser also said he'd like to know about this, noting that it is under water after a rain. Discussed possible issues: drainage, poured too low.

D. Binkley also let the department know that all employees should be wearing name badges while on duty at for the Parks dept.

R. Yover said he was concerened about the playground and felt it would be more fun for the kids if there was a slide and swing set. A. Flora said this is something that we could look into purchasing separately next year.

R. Yover also complimented the piers, how fast they went up and the quality of the work. He also complimented Gary Laiter and Bev Watts on all their hard work at the beach and campground.

C. Hensell thanked A. Flora and all who showed up to the initial quiet claim proceedings for Kramer's Beach. Some discussion was then held about the proceedings and Kramer's Beach upcoming events.

D. Ballard adjourned meeting.

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Richard Ballard-president

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Tom Busch-vice president

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Sam Byer-member

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David Sinn-member

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Teresa Trout-member