



MINUTES

Morrow County Parks Committee Minutes

*Tuesday, March 19, 2024 |1:30pm – 2:30pm| Meeting called to order by Mike Gorman
Location: Morrow County Public Works – Conference Room, 365 West Highway 74, Lexington, Oregon 97839*

In Attendance – Roll Call

Meeting Called to Order 1:01pm

In Person: Rose Kylo, ♦Jeff Wenholz, *Dean Robinson, *Geroge Shimer, *Kirsti Cason, *Greg Close, *Mike Gorman, Nathen Braun, Brian Snyder, Matt Jensen, Eric Imes, Brian Spivey

Digital/Electronic Attendance: *Kim Cutsforth

Committee Members Absent: *Sheryl Bates, *Glen Maret

*Denotes Morrow County Parks Committee Member ♦Denotes Morrow County Board of Commissioner

Pledge of Allegiance

Pledge of Allegiance conducted.

Minutes Review

The minutes from September 19, 2023, were reviewed.

Motion to approve as submitted: Dean Robinson

Seconded by: Greg Close

All in favor, approved with no changes.

Parks Committee Seats

Kirsti C. – Provided information regarding the Morrow County Parks Committee (MCPC) seats that are currently vacant, or have terms expiring, and those positions that have received applications for.

Mike Gorman turned in an application for the Park User Group, Motorized recreation in September 2023, however the applications are only valid for six months. Kirsti requested that the application be honored and have a change date and initialed if Mike was still willing to serve. Consensus was that was ok to do.

Boardman Parks and Recreation District (BPRD) representative is still noted as Linda Prag and will need to submit BPRD minutes to indicate that George Shimer will be their representative.

The Morrow County Public Works Term is also expiring, Greg Close will continue to be the Parks representative for Morrow County Public Works.

Discussions regarding submitting recommendations to the Board of Commissioners (BOC). Was decided to submit appointments to BOC on the consent calendar for approval with notation that BRPD is working on submitting required documentation.

Motion made to appoint Mike Gorman for the Motorized Park User Group, Greg Close for the Morrow County Public Works Department, and Geroge Shimer as Boardman Parks and Recreation District contingent of minutes from the district indicating that George will be their representative.

Motion to approve: Mike Gorman

*Seconded by: Kirsti Cason**

**Rose Kyлло 2nd first however she is not a voting member of the committee*

All in favor, approved.

Parks Information & Requests

Kirsti C. – Oregon Recreation Immunity Senate Bill 1576 updates regarding the issue due to injury in New Port that the individual said that injury happened as walking to work and was not involved with recreation. Reaching out to Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and Oregon Park and Recreation Association for details on what that would mean for the county. At this time with the Senate Bill passing, it is a temporary fix that will renew the clause until January 2026. In mean time state and departments are working on items to address the situation. Herriage Trail would be impacted by this more than the County parks but still need to be aware.

User information for reservations and use of the park. Explained that the numbers may not correlate due to the way reservations are made and will never show actual users as this is not tracked. Return rate at all parks is 30% or better. Actual numbers vary greatly from “Registered Guests” there could be on average three to six people per reservation.

- Discussions on better ways to track actual number of users.
 - o Rely on camp host to enter data at time of check in.
 - o Make user provide details.

Park Revenues are holding the same as last year with a slight decline from COVID years when parks were one of few facilities open to public.

All-Terrain Vehicle Youth Hands On Evaluations with a big assistance from the Morrow County Sheriff Department and often recognized by OPRD at their Law Enforcement workshops due to the numbers that are trained.

Mike G. – Questioned why this year is already showing reservations for 2024 camping season.

Kirsti C. explained that due to reservations opening January 1 each year the numbers show what has already been reserved for this season. This is also why if you look back at historical documentation the numbers may change due to people cancelling or more making reservations, the data shown is as of March 18, 2024. People have figured out that they can make reservations early online, however we still take reservations in the office. Reservations are still struggling with one individual making multiple reservations, so park staff still has to reach out to registered guests and update reservation details for emergency and security reasons.

Regarding cancellation policy at different locations in state, County Parks policy is that if you notify 7 or more days prior to scheduled arrival date no charge, 6-2 days prior responsible for one night, and if 24 hours, a no show or already at the park and depart early responsible for full reservation. One of the

main differences between County Parks and the State is that the state has a non-resident fee for those that are not residence in the state of Oregon.

George S. indicated that BPRD followed Morrow County Parks Cancellation policy for their own as it is also like those around the area.

CAMPING REGISTRATION FEE INCREASE PROPOSAL

Greg C. provided information regarding increase to campsite rates to help with costs associated with parks as economic items have increased. Request input and thoughts from the committee regarding a rate increase.

Kirsti C. provided a cost analysis comparison of Oregon State Parks Campsite rates that were available online. Explaining that working on a spreadsheet that would provide more details to compare rates and amenities from park to park but did not get completed prior to meeting will have available at the next Parks Committee meeting should they be necessary.

Rates: Noting no day use fee.

Full (power, water, sewer)	Partial (power, water)	Water Only	Dry/Tent	Cabin 1 (A-Frame, Tough shed)	Cabin 2 (Juniper Log)
\$29	\$25	\$22	\$19	\$49	\$88

Matt J. offered details regarding a change in season personnel changing to full-time and that looked at fees and similar parks in the area, County Parks significantly lower on rates. The cost difference for seasonal to full time with wages and the overhead rate is estimated to be around \$97,000. Suggested idea to increase the rate to help offset these costs, with the understanding that fees would not change this year but would be implemented in 2025. Believe when people pulling \$100,00 RV units most will not have issue with paying more because of the facilities and amenities that the County offers.

Mike G. Asked what type of rate increase seeking?

Greg C. proposed a \$10 charge making a full \$39.

Kirsti C. Questioned what the rates and parks that were compared.

Matt J. local area parks and the State Parks sites in and around the dunes.

Kirsti C. Discussed the difficulties and struggles the park staff went through when rates changed. Comparing dunes to our parks feel is bad comparison as completely different dynamics, terrain, and aspects of terrain and surrounding areas regarding proximity to amenities and cities. Feel that a large increase to offset park costs would hurt the parks more than a smaller increase to rates would be.

Eric I. need to be on par with other ATV parks and, more than just ours, should compare the rates of all the parks and what they offer.

Mike G. sympathetic with staying the same and being cheapest in the state or possibly have the county subsidize funds, reason is if increase to greatly may impact those that visit and reduce length of stay but also potentially have adverse effects on communities where travelers purchase goods. Volume being cheaper may offset and encourage people visiting.

Discussions regarding pros and cons of rate increases and how may potentially impact the local economy with spending as traveling through the area. Suggestions increasing rates over cost of time by a percentage.

Consensus was to compare rates and amenities of the parks to help determine costs, and the possibility of having different rates at each of the parks based on the amenities that they offer.

Kirsti C. explained that would continue to develop an analysis spreadsheet for amenities at parks with rates throughout the area to bring back to the committee for review at the next meeting.

Greg C. prefers not to have different rates at the parks but does understand parks are different. Does not really want to see Cabin rates increased.

George S. provided details on how BPRD determined when it was time to increase the rates and how they set the rate. Explained they looked at the usage and because majority of sites (90% capacity) booked consistently for whole season increasing the rates would help with cost burden for maintenance. When did increase they could not go over a certain percentage believed was 8% but could not remember why that was.

\$68 for the river, \$58 for interior off river and \$18 for tent.

Greg C. to research what the law says regarding increasing rates and bring it back to the committee.

Kirsti C. explained the possibility of using an ATV grant when opens again in the future to include the change in the employees and the increase in fees can be used as match towards those additional costs, but as with any grant it is not a guarantee that will get the funding.

Discussing regarding opening the parks earlier in the year. The reason open when do is often due to the temperatures and weather conditions with the accessibility to park amenities and things freezing.

Youth Hunt Applications

Greg C. – There were two successful hunters this. One from Irrigon, Kassidy Griffin and one from Ione Darby Spivey.

Discussions regarding the weather, how many hunters participated, maximum number of participants and questions that were raised on the youth hunters allowing previous successful hunters being able to hunt.

Contracts and Agreements

Greg C. –

Grazing (Fire Fuel Reduction Agreement) working very well to help with fire fuel reduction. The contractor has been great to deal with and communication with them and moving of animals has been exceptional.

Logging Request for Proposal (RFP) continues to be a work in progress and getting the contract put together. Meet several times with Brian Spivey consulting with him in putting together a plan for all the parks. Cutsforth hazard tree removal and Anson Wright and OHV thinning and cleaning burn areas. Weather conditions have not been conducive for moving forward with logging. Brian also explained that lumber markets have plummeted, and many mills are closed or sitting on timber in yard. In the past 35 years in field of timber some of the worst markets have ever seen. Still need to look at addressing the issue at Cutsforth Park with hazard trees for public safety. Using NRCS for assistance is not a possibility because of being a government agency.

Kirsti C. – Working on the RFP and struggling due to the volatility of the lumber markets and getting the estimate of the board feet to harvest in the parks and the quantities at each park to help determine if it is cost effective to harvest the with timber markets being so low.

Park Host Agreements – will be advertising and taking applications for review prior to the park opening.

The Landing – finalizing the paper work for the RFP that will also soon be published for public bidding. It is likely that the individuals that were there last year will not be returning.

Oregon Department of Forestry – Heli pad and RV site use agreement nearly completed and finalized for the 2024 fire season.

Future Grant Funding Opportunities

Kirsti C. – Local Government (Winte/Spring 2024) grant seen a huge increase in funding via Oregon Lottery dollars due to the steady and increasing revenues. The program is seeing \$10 million plus added to this program for funding grants. Tried to apply for funding for the 4-H building at Cutsforth Park, upon research learned that the program would not fund structural work with the exception of items like a vault restroom and bathhouses adjoining an aquatic type of facility. Campsite amenities will fund with out question so this fall will start gathering details to prepare for the 2025 Local Government Grant program. But not all was lost on the time spent researching the project at Cutsforth. Discovered it is unknown who the owner of the 4-H/Darcy Coil Building is. As there were documents signed by the County Court (prior to Board of Commissioners) that stated that the Heppner 4-H Council owned the structure. Upon asking for documents of ownership the extension office did not have any. Searched through the county archives and found only mentions of the structure in the Cutsforth Property Sale to the county from the Cutsforth Park Association that mentioned that the Heppner 4-H Council shall continue to have use of structure located at the park. In County Court record minutes, it was again noted as the structure known as the 4-H building was constructed by volunteers and to receive funding from the County it was to be understood that with the construction of the Fireplace it would be changed to a public use facility. Reached out to the County Accessors office and Planning departments to see if they had any documentation they did not. So, there is no definitive notation on ownership of the structure other than was “built by volunteers” during the time frame that Cutsforth Association owned the property.

At this time due to time restrictions and spending time researching the 4-H Building improvements will not seeking funding this year. The 2025 grant cycle may possibly try for campsite upgrades at Cutsforth Park and finish upgrading campsites. The Local Government grant program last year there approximately 54 applicants seeking funding from the \$10 million program funds available from State Parks many were unable to be funded, this year there is already 50 applicants for the estimated \$28 million available and it is hopeful that the majority of the projects will have the ability to be funded.

All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Grant Program currently running on the 1st year of biennium 2023-2024 grant that aids with the expenses for the operations, maintenance of the park and equipment, and the employees. Revenues from camping help pay for the park hosts, utilities and other items that can be used as match for this grant. The volunteers who visit the park put in many hours and their time working on the trails and park facilities can also be used as match for the grant and are an instrumental part of making the park successful and securing the grant funding.

County Opportunity grant have not applied for several years as just have not come to a decision on what project to move forward on. There are opportunities for campground maintenance and amenities like playgrounds.

A second ATV grant for equipment was recently approved to purchase a tracked Polaris side x side that will be purchased in the 2025 budget year.

Recreation Trails Program (RTP) Grant representative would like to see Morrow County to apply for a motorized recreation trail grant for improvements on the trails as very few agencies apply for the motorized funds. Because it is a federally funded program there are more restrictions and guidelines, one of which is they no longer fund equipment purchases and want to see ground development trail work. Things like building new trails, installing or replacing culverts, Geotech fabric, rock and signage are things that like to see for this grant.

Anson Wright Park – Updates/Projects/Grants

Greg C. – Host and staff has kept up on maintenance issues. Hope to add more gravel to sites, widen and level out to accommodate trailers better. Removal of dead trees and repairing and replacing tables.

Cutsforth Park – Updates/Projects/Grants

Greg C. – Electrical work with power upgrades as some boxes are just outdated and need to be replaced as they keep grounding out. Cabins have had heaters replaced, painted the interior, replaced mattresses, and added indoor solar lighting. Main gate has been upgraded to have a lock with a gate remote so those that have property on the back side of the park can still have access.

OHV Park – Updates/Projects/Grants

Greg C. – Constructed three-sided storage shed building to store lumber that was constructed by lumber processed through our own sawmill and park timber. Built multiple picnic tables and a volunteer created a custom brand, so all new tables are branded. Constructed garbage can holders. Removed existing trail head and refurbishing the cattleguards to improve the entrance and make it nicer. Installing culverts to help divert water off trails. Many trails are still impacted with snow and as melts attempting to help

Events & Happenings

Kirsti C. – Stephanie Chase with Morrow County Veterans Department has inquired about doing something for veterans at the parks but unsure what or when. The Blue Mountain Century Scenic Bikeway event will be held sometime in September 2024.

All Parks will open May 9 with an event scheduled at the OHV Park opening weekend and there is already a waiting list at the OHV Park for campsites that weekend. Motorcycle race is still pending and looking like will be held in September. Second Season Youth Elk Hunt will be in November at the OHV Park. At Cutsforth the 4-H camp will be in July and have a leadership camp prior to the full camp, the Glen Ward Memorial Youth Fishing Derby will be in June, Elk's Father's Day picnic will be in July. There is nothing scheduled at this time for Anson Wright. Anson Wright will close on October 31, OHV and Cutsforth will close the Monday after second elk season.

Public Comment

George S. – Boardman parks and Recreation District has worked with the Morrow County Sheriff's Department and placing lifejackets on the river or any swimming spot making life jackets for free.

Oregon Recreation Park District interactive programs for kids. Working on tying in with the Heritage Trail, they pick up a brochure and its an interactive virtual program. May be something that can tie into with county parks. BPRD are working on putting items together for hiking, water trails and other activities. Kidsinparks.com is a great resource and associated with Oregon Parks.

Kirsti C.- have set up similar programs with Oregon State Parks and that Travel Oregon but this is another great idea to engage youth and families.

Mike G. – recognizes work and efforts of the parks and that has enjoyed the parks since youth and nice to see efforts to keep open and improve.

Brian S. – Smokey Bears 80th Birthday this year so there is opportunity to promote using Smokey Bear at events at park events if coordinate. Will place on event calendar to try and get smokey bear there.

Next Meeting and Wrap-up

September 17, 2024 | Time: 1:00p.m. | Morrow County Public Works, Conference Room, Lexington, Oregon 97839

Minutes Submitted by: Kirsti Cason
Morrow County Public Works Assistant

Reviewed on: September 17, 2024

Motion to approve made by: Greg Close

Motion Seconded by: Mike Gorman

Neigh's: None

Date Approved: September 17, 2024 with corrections as noted below.

Corrections if any to be noted here:

MINUTES REVIEW section – the year in the date is incorrect needs to read September 19, 2023 not 2024.

--- Correction has been made to document as noted --- KLC 09/17/2024