

Minutes

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY PARKS COMMISSION

Thursday, July 30, 2020, 4:00 p.m.

Meeting held by Virtual Zoom technology

Members Present: Judy Hunt, John Hemmer, Bob Franzen, Tom Erlandson, Marla Connelly, Steve Sandberg

Members Absent: Martha Anderson, Ainsley Smith

Guests Present: Brad Bentley, Sam Zafuto, Keith Carrow, Jacob Bodway, Kathy Tampio

The meeting was called to order by Judy Hunt at 4:00 p.m.

Acknowledgement of Guests and Topics Discussions

Keith Carrow: As far as state forests, I wanted to talk to you about a couple of timber harvests. We have one harvest going on in Panama State Forest, which is just north of the south end on the west side of the overland trail. I put signs up to close it at Broken Straw at the parking area and just north of the timber sales so if people hike down from the north they'll hit that sign and and some caution tape and turn around. Another one is a future sale on Twentyeighth Creek road over on the east side, the very south end. They're going to have to use a portion of the overland trail. It's built into the language of the contracts that they'll have to bring it back to its original condition or a comparable site and they're also going to use the parking lot and upgrade the parking lot after they get done. If you have any questions you can definitely email me, I can get on Zoom or come to the meeting if it's out at one of the parks next time. The other thing that I wanted to talk about is we had a Friends of Chautauqua stewardship agreement previously when we started the Greenway Plan years ago. It just kind of fell apart. There's renewed interest so I wanted to talk to the Commission about that and just make sure it was okay with you guys to proceed forward.

Brad Bentley: Steve Sandberg has been put on hold and he can't listen or talk. Is it something Kathy you've done or ...

Kathy Tampio: No, it was being coordinated by my deputy in the office. I'll get Olivia to see what the issue is.

Brad Bentley: Okay. They're working on it Steve.

Judy Hunt: The agreement's already developed, right Keith?

Keith Carrow: There is a previous agreement. We just need to renew it. We have nothing active right now but there's interest to renew.

Judy Hunt: Has it changed at all?

Tom Erlandson: I talked to Bob and he was in his truck going to his house so he could hook in on video. He's heading back home. He has two numbers but he didn't have the right numbers that Kathy just gave me so I relayed those for each, so he's going to enter by phone.

Olivia Ames: Excuse me, Steve. There's an option for you to allow audio and I can't control that. You have to approve that.

Brad Bentley: He can't hear you.

Judy Hunt: And I can't call him because that wouldn't work cause his phone...

Brad Bentley: Well I'll write him a message.

Olivia Ames: He needs to use his computer audio and approve.

Brad Bentley: There he is. He's connecting.

Olivia Ames: You can tell him he can call in on a phone also.

Steve Sandberg: Can you hear me?

Brad Bentley: Yes.

Steve Sandberg: I can hear you!

Judy Hunt: Well, we're discussing the previous agreement with the Friends of Chautauqua, that it needs to be renewed and does it need to be changed in any way Keith?

Keith Carrow: I don't think so. I'll go over it with my supervisor and the interested parties. I want to restart it. It would still only apply to state forests and they would cover the volunteers with New York State's workers disability insurance. From the sounds of it Chautauqua County is behind this, they're for it and the union is too.

Judy Hunt: We don't have to do anything?

Keith Carrow: You don't have to do anything, I just wanted to let you know.

Jacob Bodway: I'm the president of the New York Mountain Bicycling Association (NYMBA).

Brad Bentley: Jacob presented here before.

Jacob Bodway: I've been speaking with Brad and with Keith for the past six months or so about the state of the overland trails. We recently kind of got approved that NYMBA, that the bike club would help out with maintenance on the overland Trails, specifically on the DEC lands only. The private lands are still for the county. We'll be working with the county to coordinate specific projects that need to be done on any of the overland trails. I've been working with Keith and I actually walked the trail with Keith and I've been coming up with new ideas to maybe reroute the trail in certain sections where there's harvest or where there's really bad erosion. I'm going to be applying to a couple grants in the Chautauqua County region and also the greater Buffalo Community Foundation for \$50,000 to get the trails fixed. That \$50,000 grant can be renewed every year until the projects are done. It could be 5 years, maybe \$250,000 dollars. That's where we're looking at right now is maintaining the overland trail with the county on DEC land where there's erosion issues that have been causing some problems with the overland trails and also possibly working with the county to fix some of the bridges that have seen better days. Any questions?

Keith Carrow: I don't think there's much more to add to it. There's some kind of scenarios, we'd like to find a path to eliminate some of the needs to have bridges. Just reduce the overall future costs because every so often they've got to go in and either replace boards or the entire bridge. And there are a lot of them out there. If we could reduce the need then it would be great.

Tom Erlandson: Keith, how would you reduce the need for bridges? Reroute the trail or what?

Keith Carrow: Rerouting the trails, I would agree, just finding a better area. Sometimes I think to put culvert pipes out there, probably go oversize, drag one in. To some degree maybe just changing culvert pipe to a better spot. Hopefully it's going to be self-cleaning. Maybe try to plan it out with the grant money and workforce that we have.

Tom Erlandson: If I heard right, this is on state land, is that correct?

Keith Carrow: Yes, it's state land.

Brad Bentley: I for one think (inaudible) thank Jacob for all they're coordination and Abdella, even though he is not here, looking into all the agreements, getting us to a point where we can have a very easy process. It's done on state land and everybody working together to improve the overland trail. As we all know, there is limited resources in the county and with COVID it's gotten only worse. These types of efforts are tremendous. I think they serve such a tremendous good. I just want to thank everybody for their efforts to get this far and looking forward to the improvements that can be made. Thanks guys.

Judy Hunt: Well we said we want citizen help. This is another instance of it.

Tom Erlandson: Well this is amazing help. Thank you very much.

Jacob Bodway: This will tie in with the Chautauqua County's Greenway Plan. Just fixing the overland trail, because all the work has already been done on the Greenways proposal,

I can submit all of that by a pdf document, the visions, to the grant proposals and that will just (cross talk). Absolutely, the Greenway Plan is 50 or a hundred pages, it's really long so having that, and I'll just focus specifically on the overlands and I think we also need to focus on the waterways too. Getting grants for the waterways is to getting trees removed, just getting funding for the trails in Chautauqua County because the trails are being used now more than ever because of COVID. We are seeing an increase in use of trails and a decrease in funding so we have to look elsewhere I think in the state and also probably nationally, with national grants as well.

Judy Hunt: What do you need from us as a commission?

Jacob Bodway: Your endorsement but also I want to be in communication with you because I think this is something we need to decide together and something I would like to have broad approval and broad acceptance for these kinds of improvements on the trails. I'd like to come to more of these meetings and get more involved. I will be a Chautauqua County resident in a couple weeks. I'm moving to Bemus Point so I'll be more available to answer questions and help out.

Judy Hunt: And your grant applications they want to know who you are partnering with, you can certainly put the Chautauqua County Parks Commission in that category as part of your grant request as well.

Jacob Bodway: Absolutely. That's pretty much all we have on our end. Because of the harvest are going to be happening well in the state forest, in Panama State Forest, we need to rethink where the trail is and maybe reroute it to dryer, higher ground where it's not so up and down, getting rid of the bridges and also making the trail a little bit more accessible for winter sports as well. You can't really cross country ski going straight down the hill and going straight back up the hill. It's too dangerous and too much maintenance. We want to reduce the maintenance, get the trails more sustainable and more accessible for all four seasons.

John Hemmer: That's nice on state land, you're agreement, there's no individual landowners to worry about. You should be able to get about easily, right?

Kieth Carrow: Yes.

Jacob Bodway: That's the plan. I hope ...I'm on the trails on a weekly basis so I know where the blowdowns are and Mark is going to be resuming his work for the county, I'll be in coordination with him to have him specifically work on the private lands to get the blowdowns out and I have a chainsaw certification through the (inaudible) so I can remove some of the blowdowns on the state portions of the overland trails just to kind of ease the load for the county generally. As the more we work together the more coordinated we can separate things into sections and work much easier, more efficiently than any one person trying to march over 45 miles of trails which is just impossible.

Judy Hunt: That's great. So you don't need us to do anything, just listen and pat you on the back, right?

Jacob Bodway: Right.

Judy Hunt: Well, we'll do that. Bob didn't get in that did he?

Tom Erlandson: I think he was in his truck waiting to get back home. I didn't know he was heading for our house. I suggested that he come over and we could sit next to each other.

Minutes Review and Acceptance

Judy Hunt: I guess we've done acknowledgement of guests and topics discussions. Minutes review. Did you read the whole thing folks? Certainly more comprehensive than the minutes I sent you. I printed the whole thing and sent them to Bob. I don't know if he received it or not.

Tom Erlandson: He's seen it. I know that.

Judy Hunt: Well I think she's planning to do that again for this meeting. I accept your acceptance of those minutes as they were presented.

Marla Connelly: So moved.

The minutes of the June 25, 2020 meeting were approved as presented.

Chairman Franzen joined the meeting at this point. He was experiencing technical difficulties to join the meeting.

Bob Franzen: What are we doing today? This is Bob calling. (Crosstalk)

Judy Hunt: Keith talked about the timber sales and the part of the Panama trail siting and for a future trail they are going to do the same kind of thing and the company is going to upgrade the parking lot as well.

Keith Carrow: The difference with the east side of the overland trail, south end, we'll probably going to have to use part of the overland trail as a skid trail which is something I generally would want to avoid but it's the only way in now. The contractor's going to be responsible for bringing it back to what it was previously and upgrading the parking area.

Judy Hunt: We also talked about an agreement that we had with Friends of Chautauqua Bob, we have to renew it. It's for work on state forest land, gives them workers disability coverage. He just wanted our input as to whether we agree to renew it. There isn't any action that we have to take. You just want us to say go for it, right?

Bob Franzen: Yes, right. Exactly right. We'll just get that taken care of.

Judy Hunt: Then Jacob from the mountain bike association, he's looking to do some grants that will provide maintenance on state land only. Rerouting some trails possibly because

of erosion or because of harvesting. Possibly some bridges will be eliminated and replaced with culverts and moved to higher ground because some of them are hard to maintain because of wetness. He wants our endorsement. They are looking to make the trails more accessible and more sustainable. I suggested that he lists us as a partner in his grant endeavors. That doesn't require any official action on our part.

Keith Carrow: All of that would be done on state forest.

Operations

Brad Bentley: I have a couple of items. We did put out a press release yesterday confirming the parks will be opening, Erlandson, Luensman, August 3rd. The facilities, the restrooms, will not be open. Picnic tables will be spaced out to the extent that there are. No large gatherings or organized activities will be permitted at the parks and maintain social distancing. We'll be putting up signs between now and Monday to make sure everyone is aware of the requirements. Make sure they don't tear down the bathrooms when they can't get the doors open. We'll make sure there's enough signage up in all the areas to get everybody informed on what's going on. We're happy that we are able to keep the gatekeeper so they can actually open the parks. I thank Sam for calling them up and convincing them to overwrite their contracts and save the parks money for the time that they work opening the parks. There was a little bit of negotiations that had to go on there. We will continue down that road, hopefully I'll stop getting questions about when the parks will be open.

Bob Franzen: I've got one question, is the water going to be on at Erlandson?

Brad Bentley: We're in the process of whatever wasn't tested when we, before we shut down, we're going to have the signs up whether it's potable or not. There are some that are probably not potable. We're going to have signs on the ones that aren't.

Bob Franzen: The one at Erlandson, if the electric is on that means we should have a flag with a light. Is that going to be on one or are we just going to not have any water at all? I don't know if its potable or not, we'd probably have to check.

Brad Bentley: The intention is to get the water running and potable. But it may not be that way on August 3rd. If anything is not potable, we'll have a sign that says it's not potable.

Bob Franzen: Okay, because the other one out there at Luensman, that's, the one at Erlandson had to have the power turned on.

Brad Bentley: To the extent that we can get the water tested and it passed, then we'll take the sign off. We'll make sure that (inaudible) appropriate use.

John Hemmer: Are there any plans for trash cans or trash removal or a port-a-potty or anything like that at the parks?

Brad Bentley: No port-a-potty, because then we'd have to go into cleaning. That's all COVID and we don't want to do that. We've been actually doing trash removal to the extent

possible. We've been mowing and so those services will continue. I know that on occasion I've gotten calls that our garbage cans are full. We try to get out there as fast as we can but we are limited. But we actually have been doing trash pickup and we'll continue to do that.

John Hemmer: Okay, thanks.

Brad Bentley: Any other questions on the parks?

Bob Franzen: No, that sounds like that covers it. As long as there's trash pickup and the bags for dogs, otherwise everything else will be sufficient.

Brad Bentley: Yeah, I think we got the bags and the doggie bags and we'll get those out there. So we are going to (inaudible) money as we can.

Tom Erlandson: I was up at Erlandson this morning and the trash and the doggie bags, full doggie bag container were full so I emptied both.

Brad Bentley: I suspect that wasn't the first time. We'll be getting after that. Nothing else? August 3rd is when we will be going back to full staffing at the highway department and that includes the two dedicated resources for the parks. As Jacob kind of alluded to, I'll throw in a word of caution there, Bart Scheer, we have plans to bring him back and replace John Schnars as the parks supervisor. This is in conjunction with a series of about 7 other supervisor moves that are happening due to retirements within the highway department. I caution that all the paperwork is not done yet. There's some complications that need to be worked through to make sure that that's finalized. So, Jacob, you got in front of me a little bit, so I'll announce it formally when it's official but there's a lot of paperwork that has to be done between now and Monday. There's some things that just have to be caught up from the HR perspective. That is the plan. We're going to try and get that done but till it's in the bank, it's not in the bank. (Inaudible) our timber, the sales, we're actually Reinforced Products is out on property number eleven. They started last week or this week Keith? This week or maybe it was last year. I just wanted to get, anyways, they're just recently out there and we are closing off that area, that part of the trail because we are seeing some interactions that are not favorable. We actually brought cleaning up garbage that someone did a dumping site on because they saw the gate was open and they dumped a whole load of couches and other stuff out there. We're out cleaning that up. In the lean-to there's a bunch of families with a bunch of ATVs out there. We called the sheriff, had the sheriff out there, talked to the family and they decided to pack up and leave but then another family moved in probably within hours. No ATVs on this one but there are very close to the logging activities so we're putting up signs, we're closing the parking lot. The Reinforced thinks they'll be in there for probably a month, maybe two months to get the timber harvest done. It will be a temporary closure of this area. But, the last thing we want to do is have someone out there, a little kid get hurt because of machinery. I discussed it with legal and they said that's the appropriate actions to take while all along. They supported the temporary closure of that area. Any questions on property eleven?

Keith Carrow: One thing to forewarn you, I talked to Joe Graves, I'm not sure who your contact is, but, they're shutting down their crews as of tomorrow for two weeks because they've

got wood spoiling at their lot down at the mill and in the mill so they could be shutting down for two weeks. If that affects anything that you're doing.

Brad Bentley: Is that at Ram (?).

Keith Carrow: At Ram (?).

Brad Bentley: Well that's news to me. I hadn't heard that. As of last week they were still going on.

Keith Carrow: This was news today that I got just an hour ago.

Brad Bentley: Well, either they're just shutting down for two weeks. They don't expect to be there that long anyway. We have dumping issues there so keeping the gate closed while they got all that stuff, keep people out. I think it's a good idea. Property number 9 out in North Harmony the logging company Gutchess has finished up and cleaned up. Rick Constantino from Forecon went out yesterday, earlier this week and had Mike Moyers look at it this morning through all the rain and looks like everything is holding, access roads, so we are going to release them from their performance bond. Looks like they did a pretty good job. I've got good news on this one too. This is the same property we have been trying to get another oil/gas lease going. It finally got signed, we've been working on this almost two years now, trying to get this oil and gas lease negotiated and we have everything signed. Sam Kohler from SK Enterprises is going to be (inaudible) oil and gas on this property and royalties will be going into pay property taxes first for the reforestation properties and anything left over will go into Parks capital. That's been a long time coming so it looks like everything is coming together, all good news on that one. Try to get some revenue in here.

John Hemmer: Sounds great. Thank you.

Tom Erlandson: Brad, I have a question. Are they going to be reproducing the old wells or are they going to be drilling new ones?

Brad Bentley: Yeah, this was to take over the existing wells. They had been shut in, they had been basically non-producing for the last 5 to 7 years. They've actually probably been reinvigorated and the guy that's taking it over is very familiar with getting the old wells producing again. He has ideas, realistic expectations on production. I've met him, I've talked to him over probably the last year. He's a really good guy, he knows what he's doing, it's what he does for a living. He's a small producer but he knows what he got into. He's not actually allowed to drill any wells. If there's any new wells drilled on county property they have to be put out for bid so he just took over the existing wells.

Judy Hunt: Are these oil wells or gas wells?

Brad Bentley: Both. Yeah you get a little bit of both out of some of the wells. He'll be making some improvements to some of the tanks and refurbishing the ... I actually went out with him and all the motors turned over believe it or not.

Judy Hunt: They were well greased maybe.

Brad Bentley: I don't know. He was able to get them turned on. I was surprised but I think we got the right person for the right job. With that I think, Sam, he's asked me to bring forth, anybody who has not signed the Ethics training, they need to do that now.

Judy Hunt: Do we print it and send it to you? I don't know how to do that.

Sam Zafuto: If you can mail it to me that's fine. Just the sign-in sheet.

Judy Hunt: Okay.

Brad Bentley: We need to say that you've read the Ethics. And for those who got it done, thank you Tom and Ainsley, Marla, John

Judy Hunt: Gee, we better get on it.

Brad Bentley: Steve, Judy and Bob.

Judy Hunt: Okay, got it.

Brad Bentley: Those are typically done toward the beginning of the year but obviously because of meeting cancellations and COVID. But they are hounding us daily now.

Judy Hunt: Okay. John – legislation? What you guys doing over there?

Legislation

John Hemmer: I don't think we had anything last month that affected the parks. Of course we don't have any of the prefiles for August yet.

Brad Bentley: I just have one other kind of Parks/Legislative budget note. I've been told by Kathleen Dennison who's their budget director that the Occupancy Tax revenues are down. They've told me that we normally get about \$150,000 from that. They're going to cut that by \$50,600, which is a significant portion of the operating budget for the parks. I asked Kathleen if I could recover that cost through for asking for additional local share. She said yes so I am putting that funding in as a request for local share in the budget. I'm sure Mr. Hemmer will be seeing those budget stuff. We'll see how that all goes when it comes into the rest of the budget requests from everybody else as well. I did want to note that things are tight and we're trying to do the best we can to keep the money for the parks, but I fear it's going to be an uphill battle.

Judy Hunt: Well at least you didn't let it go. You talked about the local so ...

John Hemmer: Yeah, well we'll see how much the legislature likes parks.

Judy Hunt: They don't come to our parties when we invite them, I know that.

Trail Development

Judy Hunt: Trail Development? Bob, I don't mean to take over but I have an agenda in front of me. Bob, are you there?

Bob Franzen: Go ahead.

Judy Hunt: Well, hopefully next month we'll get together in person.

Bob Franzen: Yes, we got to.

Judy Hunt: Trail Development? I guess what you're doing?

Brad Bentley: Yeah, there's not much (inaudible) but that obviously has come to a halt.

Judy Hunt: On hold. Okay. Overview? Anything? Well they're going to be open.

Bob Franzen: They'll be open, yes.

Waterways

Judy Hunt: Waterways. I know Jacob mentioned he'd like to something on the waterways. I don't imagine anything's being done currently.

Brad Bentley: Other than what naturally occurs.

Judy Hunt: Well yeah. That good I would think.

Brad Bentley: (Crosstalk) the plan is to get back out on the waterways. We've got the staff and the money – it's all in the plans. The best we can do.

Tom Erlandson: Brad, can you give us a report on the Town of Carroll work at the Falconer/Frewsburg road? I've been down there to look at that and I thought they did a super job of enlarging the parking lot.

Brad Bentley: Unfortunately I've not been able to take a run by one of these days. I've not been able to get down there. They haven't really told me anything about how they're doing. Good to hear that they are doing a good job.

Tom Erlandson: It really looked good and enlarged the parking lot. They didn't really do anything to our actual launch along the river bank but the parking lot, was apparently enlarged and looked good.

Brad Bentley: Yeah that's in line with what they had requested help with. They're just really asking me if I would help them from a highway standpoint with equipment and resources. I told them unfortunately due to the shortage of resources from the furloughs I really had nothing I could give them at this time. It's in line with what they told me they were going to do.

Judy Hunt: But they got it done.

Brad Bentley: They got it done. I think their problem was people parking on their lawns because of increased use. That would take care of their issue.

Marketing

Judy Hunt: Marketing?

Brad Bentley: Ah, marketing. The Wegmans Trail – good news there. We have the plates, I've given them to Mike (inaudible) so the guys are back. We'll actually be putting out the Wegmans plates. For those that are on Zoom, here's the booklet. It's a very nice booklet and I'll be talking to Shelly (inaudible) to formally market this thing out once we have the plates up on the trails. That's actually a good thing, I was waiting for enough people to get those things up and out to the trails.

Judy Hunt: Will they print that in house Brad or how to you do that?

Brad Bentley: Wegmans actually prints them.

Judy Hunt: Oh, wow.

Brad Bentley: I had a couple of them and I gave a bunch to Sam or Mike. Wegmans will put them in their stores. If we get those out, I may try to get a press release on this from the County Executive just to announce it. I need the plates out, posts in the ground before I do the press release.

Bob Franzen: Can we put those in the, like Chautauqua County has in different spots. There's one at Chautauqua, there's one here at the airport, you know those boxes?

Brad Bentley: I would say put them in anywhere where we likely have tourist brochures and pamphlets.

Judy Hunt: I'd like some for our community center here in Findley Lake. I had a call the other day and I had trail brochures that I could give but there weren't any up there. Maybe I can connect with you when they are available.

Brad Bentley: I think they are sold out of the Wegmans website.

Judy Hunt: Okay, that's a good reference point.

Brad Bentley: I don't know if it's up on the website yet.

Old Business

Judy Hunt: I'll check it out. Probably nothing on the Luensman bathroom?

Brad Bentley: No, our services are shut down. No progress there.

New Business

Judy Hunt: New business?

Bob Franzen: Was there anything on Sam Kohler up there on doing on Warner Road?

Brad Bentley: I did, we have the agreement formally signed, he has the authorization to produce oil and gas. That was a big win.

Bob Franzen: Okay, good.

Brad Bentley: Hopefully we'll see some revenues this year.

Judy Hunt: Could we have the next meeting at one of the parks maybe?

Brad Bentley: I'll tell you we'll have to figure out how this whole COVID thing comes around. One of the things I am discouraging at the parks is any organized gatherings. I don't want to fly in (cross talk) and I'm kind of following the lead of the legislators. As long as they are meeting on, as long as they're not meeting in person I think there should be some deference to how they're doing it.

Judy Hunt: I agree.

Bob Franzen: Okay, if they come up with a solution that'll work.

Judy Hunt: I don't have a calendar in front of me. Who knows when the fourth Thursday is?

Brad Bentley: August 27th.

Bob Franzen: That will give us some time to think and see what we're doing and get ready anything if we need, otherwise we should do this again.

Judy Hunt: Like you say Brad it's a public meeting so you have to allow for a bigger crowd.

Next Meeting: August 27, 2020, Location to be determined

The meeting adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Tampio
Clerk, Chautauqua County Legislature