

Joint Meeting of Parks, Tourism and Economic Development Committee and Executive Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 1, 2016

1. **Call to Order:** The Parks, Tourism and Economic Development Committee (PTEDC) meeting was called to order at 9:06 AM in the County Board Room of the Trempealeau County Courthouse located at 36245 Main St, Whitehall, WI by Jon Schultz, Chair. The Executive Finance Committee called their meeting to order at 9:03 AM by Tim Zeglin and both meetings were run simultaneously in a joint session.
2. **Certification of Open Meeting Law Requirements:** Kirstie Heidenreich certified that the Open Meeting Law Requirements have been met.
3. **Roll Call:** Members present: PTEDC: Jon Schultz, Jeanne Nutter, Jean Galasinski, Chuck Walek, Curt Skoyen, and Sara Ecker; Executive Finance: Dick Miller, Tim Zeglin, Sally Miller, John Aasen, Douglas Winters. Also present were Department of Land Management staff Kevin Lien, Becky Arneson, Kirstie Heidenreich, Kyle Johnson and Tess Thompson.
4. **Adoption of Agenda:** PTEDC motion to approve the agenda by Chuck Walek; seconded by Jeanne Nutter. Motion carried. Executive Finance motion to approve the agenda: John Aasen; seconded by Dick Miller. Motion carried.
5. **Appearance by Town of Chimney Rock Officers Regarding Proposed Land Donation in Town of Chimney Rock:** Chimney Rock Chairman Gerald Hawkenson, Supervisor Kathy Zeglin, and Chimney Rock resident Brenda Pichler were in appearance before the Committees. Hawkenson stated that Chimney Rock doesn't need any more tax loss; they already have over 2,000 acres of public land. He said their Comprehensive Plan does not encourage any more public land to be created for recreational purposes and went on to say that to protect the people and the land of Chimney Rock, the Town Board opposes. Brenda Pichler stated she is a new resident to Chimney Rock and has brought with her a petition with 91 signatures of Chimney Rock residents who are opposed to a new county park in Chimney Rock, with reasons stating: the proposed county park will cause loss of tax revenue; the Comprehensive Plan doesn't support more public land; they do not have staff or funds to handle the costs that a county park would create. Kathy Zeglin stated that on July 12th when Chimney Rock had its regular monthly meeting, their County Board Representative Tim Zeglin informed them of the potential of a park in the town. Kathy asked that from the get-go, to please include the Township in any kind of decision from now on. She said Chimney Rock is the smallest township in the County, with 36 sections and 6 square miles and an assessed valuation of \$21,470,773. It has the smallest tax base of any township in the County. Furthermore, out of 23,000 acres, 2,125 are tax-exempt and 4,137 acres are in Managed Forest Land (MFL), which is reducing their tax base. She said while the township is interested in promoting tourism in the County, it has no immediate benefits to them, as they already have numerous problems on their public land. She stated they have had problems with people

trespassing, confrontations with landowners, people putting deer stands on private land, public using private driveways; public land in Chimney Rock has not been a positive for them. She said that there are zero gas stations, restaurants, retail stores or shops, hotels/motels, and businesses that would benefit from a county park. They are a rural residential community and would like to stay that way. She said if the park should fail like the park in Strum did when the village had to take it over from the county, Chimney Rock will not take it over. If the County would like to pursue the park, Chimney Rock requests: payment in lieu of taxes, upgrade the town road Zimmerman Lane or turn it in to a county road, that only silent sports be allowed, no hunting, and involve Chimney Rock in the planning process. Dick Miller addressed the Chimney Rock Board Members, saying that he apologizes if they feel excluded in the process; the process is only in the preliminary stages at this point. The next step would be to go out and look at the properties and to include the townships from that point forward. He said there was no intention of not including the towns in the process and that there are long-term ramifications with this type of donation, and the Board realizes this. John Aasen asked what percentage of the Township signed the petition and Kathy Zeglin responded that Chimney Rock has 241 citizens, with 175 eligible voting citizens, so over half of the citizens signed the petition being opposed to a new park in Chimney Rock. Sally Miller asked the Chimney Rock Board if they can think of any way that a park would be a “positive” for them in the Township. Gerald Hawkenson responded that there is no way in which they could see it as a positive, just a financial burden. Sarah Ecker asked if the Town would ever think that having a county park there would be a way to protect the land from development, such as a sand mine. Kathy Zeglin responded that their Comprehensive Plan would never allow for that and it would likely be sold as another rural residential property.

6. **Public Comment Period:** Jackie Hawkenson, Chimney Rock resident, stated that they have gone to the DNR in the past regarding trespassing and the trespassing was not just the fence line, it was well in to 40s. She said it is very frustrating because they have young grandsons that are hunting and 4-wheeling and you never know who you will run in to. She said they reported the problem to the DNR, who then turned it in to the Sheriff’s Department, and the Sheriff’s Department stated it is outside of their jurisdiction. Jackie then said a neighbor later discovered a man with a rifle standing amongst her cows, who when asked what his name was, said “That’s for me to know and for you to find out.” She said the problems go on and on. The next public commentary received was from Travis Mossman of Trempealeau Trails Bicycle Association. Travis stated that he has funds for a bike system but can’t do it on private land or state land but has been looking for public land that has been owned by the county for a long time. He said that money and interest in biking is coming from Eau Claire more than LaCrosse and people are willing to come from all over the world to come to Trempealeau County to bicycle. He said that offering mountain bike paths in the County is opening up a whole new market for people to come and spend their money and go home. He said that people are willing to travel here to spend money, and out of all the parks he’s talked to, people are making the most money at parks that have mountain bike trails and the Chimney Rock land has great road access and is close to Eau Claire. Mary Haigh, a Chimney Rock resident who owns land next to the potential land donation sight commented next. Mary said that she started farming in 1992 and wants things to stay quiet and doesn’t want to be disturbed as she does her farming. If there is a park created next to her land, she said she fences as high as any elk fence would be, going around her property in an “L” shape and she doesn’t want anyone using the rifles

nearby. The next to comment was Bob Pietrek, past president of the Elk Rod and Gun Club. Bob said that the club was one of the first landowners in Chimney Rock and in terms of problems on public land, they have been through it as well. He said they used to have a rifle range in Chimney Rock, and they closed it down. He said he is “for” and “against” this. He said they made the club property only accessible by foot and there is over 2,000 acres of continuous public land in that area, which a lot of people don’t realize. He said one of the biggest problems they run in to is communication barriers, where there are non-native speakers on site who also do not know where they are at on the land. Bob said that road accessibility and garbage left behind is a big problem as well. Mary Haigh then added to her comment that if a park is created, she wants a rule that no drones are allowed to fly over her property and that a fence must be put in.

7. **Discussion and Possible Action Regarding a Potential Private Land Donation for County Park Usage:** Chuck Walek commented that at this time, the Committee needs to gather more information, and that no action should be taken at this time. Jon Schultz responded that perhaps the only action should be to visit the site to assess it. Doug Winters asked if there was a timeline surrounding this donation; Tim Zeglin and Dick Miller responded that there was no set timeline. Sally Miller said that in her mind, the next step would be to find out what the various towns and municipalities felt about a potential donation in their area. She said she doesn’t think this Board wants to be in the business of taking land away from townships and imposing their will upon them. Sally then made a motion to go back to looking at all of the potential donation sites and take in to consideration the local landowners and Board’s feelings, and respect their Comprehensive Plan, as we would want the State to respect ours. John Aasen seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passes with the Executive Finance Committee. Kevin Lien commented that the sites should be visited for a walk-through to see if they are viable and the town boards should be invited to come along as well. Jeanne Nutter made a motion to have tours of the potential donation sites and to invite the town boards on the tours. Chuck Walek seconded. Motion unanimously carried with the PTEDC. Jon Schultz stated that the property tours will be open to all members of both committees; there is no official sub-committee being created at this time.
8. **Adjourn:** The Executive Finance Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:18AM by Tim Zeglin. The meeting of the Parks, Tourism and Economic Development Committee did not adjourn at the end of the joint meeting, but rather took a recess until 10:17AM (minutes for the regular meeting can be found in a separate document).

Submitted by: Kirstie Heidenreich, recording secretary