



ROCK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Highways & Parks

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Public Works Committee Meeting – Parks & Highway
Tuesday, December 10, 2024 – 8:00 a.m.
Public Works Department – Committee Room
3715 Newville Road
Janesville, WI 53545

Call to Order: Chair Mawhinney called the meeting of the Public Works Committee to order at 8:00 a.m.

Committee Members Present: Supervisors Homan, Mawhinney, Pennycook, Sutter, and Woodman

Committee Members Absent: None.

<u>Staff Members:</u>	Duane Jorgenson	Public Works Director
	Nick Elmer	Assistant Director Public Works
	John Traynor	Park Services Supervisor
	Amy Friend	Parks Community Coordinator
	Amanda McElroy	Administrative Professional II

<u>Others Present:</u>	Chuck Flynn	Citizen (attended in person and on Zoom)
	Rick Ellis	Department of Public Works
	Pete Koch	Department of Public Works
	Carl Lange	Friends of Rock County Parks
	Carolyn Brandeen	League of Women Voters
	Floyd Finney	Parks Advisory Board
	Dean Paynter	Parks Advisory Board
	Tom Presny	Parks Advisory Board

Approval of Agenda: Supervisor Pennycook moved approval of the agenda with a change in item order (Highway Business moved ahead of Parks Business), seconded by Supervisor Homan. ADOPTED.

Approval of Minutes Dated November 12, 2024 PARKS/HWY: Supervisor Pennycook moved approval of the minutes from November 12, 2024, as presented, seconded by Supervisor Woodman. ADOPTED.

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Citizen Participation, Communications and Announcements: Mr. Jorgenson shared a slideshow featuring photos and a video of the Department's Grinch themed parade entry in the Janesville Jolly Jingle lighted parade on December 7, 2024.

Mr. Jorgenson also shared two photographs of staff completing Snowfighter Training. Ten staff attended the training.

Mr. Jorgenson reminded the Committee that the WCHA Winter Road School is January 13-15, 2025.

Mr. Jorgenson introduced Rick Ellis as the new Town Superintendent. Mr. Ellis has been employed at Rock County for 14 years and has over 10 years of experience as a Crew Leader.

Mr. Ellis shared that he is on the Ad Hoc Committee on 2026 Employee Health Insurance and warned that the county will continue to lose staff if insurance premiums, copays, and deductibles increase.

Parks Advisory Board Communications: Mr. Presny thanked staff and County Board Supervisors for the Volunteer Appreciation Event which was held at Rock River Heritage Park on December 4, 2024.

Mr. Paynter shared a list of 2025 Candlelight Hikes (see attachment) and noted that two of the five hikes are planned at Rock County Parks.

Mr. Finney added that the Rock County Multi-Use Trail Group recently elected new officers. Supervisor Mawhinney thanked Floyd, Diane, and Cricket for their many years of service.

HIGHWAY BUSINESS

A. Review and Approval of Resolutions

1. Recognizing Tommy Woodstock: Supervisor Woodman moved the Resolution, seconded by Supervisor Sutter. ADOPTED.

B. Review, Discussion and Possible Action

1. Discussion and Possible Action – Orfordville Lease, Todd Suer: Mr. Jorgenson shared a map with the locations of the Orfordville Shop and the Suer Pit and noted that the Department has leased the Suer Pit for years to store salt. With the completion of the new Orfordville Salt Shed, a full year lease is not needed to transfer everything back and leave the site in good condition. Mr. Jorgenson recommended a six-month lease, which would be half the price and give the Department until the end of June 2025 to

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finalize everything. Supervisor Woodman moved the Orfordville Lease, seconded by Supervisor Homan. ADOPTED.

2. Discussion and Possible Action – Consider Approval of 2025 Routine Maintenance Agreement (RMA) with the State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation: Mr. Jorgenson explained that the total amount of the RMA is the same as it has been for several years. Supervisor Homan moved the RMA, seconded by Supervisor Pennycook. ADOPTED.
3. Discussion and Possible Action – Herbicide Project: Mr. Jorgenson noted that the Herbicide Project was expanded to cover all county highways, along with some state roads, town roads, and park areas. A slideshow was shared that covered the process, including public notification, general data, the application, and a cost analysis of the results for the county highway system.

Cost wise, when comparing spring mowing, a combination of spring mowing with herbicide use, and herbicide use with vision mowing, the project is cost effective. Mr. Jorgenson added that the biggest benefit has been the removal of invasives. Discussion was had about the direction of the program and Mr. Jorgenson and Mr. Traynor answered questions from the Committee. Supervisor Homan moved to continue the program with an annual review, seconded by Supervisor Woodman. ADOPTED.

4. Discussion – Staffing Update: Mr. Elmer shared that since the last meeting, there has been one retirement and two resignations. In addition, after the promotion of Mr. Ellis to Town Superintendent, there is a vacant Crew Leader position. There are currently eight vacant highway positions. Three interviews were held on November 19, and three more interviews are scheduled for tomorrow. Recruiting is ongoing with a focus on construction experience. Mr. Jorgenson warned the Committee that it could be a rough winter due to the high turnover of experienced staff. Many of the new hires lack plowing experience and it will take time to get everyone up to speed.

PARKS BUSINESS

- A. Parks Year End Report 2024: Mr. Traynor and Ms. Friend shared a PowerPoint slideshow that highlighted parks information, donations, projects, grant work, events, social media accounts, and Friends Groups. Mr. Traynor answered questions from the Committee and thanked all involved for their generous support of Rock County Parks.

Parks General

- Staffing Update- fully staffed, Guadalupe Begovatz (Parks Assistant) and Matt Karr (Maintenance Technician) just began their roles

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- Park and Trail Update- horse trails, Magnolia Bluff gate/upper restrooms, and Sportsman's Park restrooms are all closed for the season, Sugar River Park will be closing soon to avoid becoming a dump site

Parks – A Year In Review

- Donations
 - Baker Manufacturing- new pump at Magnolia Bluff commemorating 150-years in business
 - Forever 34 Foundation- fishing poles/gear at Beckman Mill
 - Friends of Beckman Mill- \$2500 for the boardwalk ramp and musical playground equipment (drum set, keyboard, and guitar)
 - Friends of Carver-Roehl- new steel roof on the pavilion
 - Friends of Rock County Parks- \$2000 for the boardwalk ramp at Beckman Mill
 - Gathering Place Fishing Club- line canisters at Indianford Park
 - Rock County Multi-Use Trail Group- trail signs reminding trail users to yield to horses
 - William Truax- planted and caring for approximately 50 Butternut trees at Rock River Heritage Park
 - Barb Matthews- memorial bench donation at Rock River Heritage Park
 - Jadon Upham- Eagle Scout shelter rehabilitation project at Rock River Heritage Park
 - Scott Skelly- navigational map for Gibbs Lake
- Projects
 - Paving projects at Magnolia Bluff (path to pavilion), Royce Dallman (parking lot repairs), and Sportsman's (ADA path to playground)
 - New steel roof on Lee Park Pavilion
 - Shoreline bank stabilization at Sweet-Allyn due to erosion issues
 - New playground installed at Rock River Heritage Park
 - Poured foundation for the Randy Reilly Memorial Pavilion at Rock River Heritage Park, project is ongoing
 - Thomas Kautz Boardwalk repair at Beckman Mill
 - Perimeter trail at Rock River Heritage Park, project is ongoing
 - United Way Day of Caring at Rock River Heritage Park (painting, staining, working on the trails)
- Grants
 - Recreational Trails Grant- awarded a total of \$90,000 from two grants to resurface the Peace Trail (both grants closed)
 - Snowmobile Trail Aids Grants- awarded \$67,860 for 226.2 miles for both the 2023-2024 (grant closed) and 2024-2025 seasons (received advance on October 10, 2024)
 - County Conservation Aids Grants- awarded \$5,000 in 2023 (closed), \$3,500 in 2024 (work in progress), and \$7,500 in 2025 (work starts in 2025)

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Supervisor Sutter left the meeting at 8:59 a.m.

- Events
 - 2024 Plat Book Photo Contest (January 1-14)- partnered with the Register of Deeds
 - Hearts in the Park (February 8-19)- Rock River Heritage Park
 - Leprechauns on the Loose (March 3-17)- six different parks
 - I Spy Egg Hunt & Eggs-ercise (March 17-31)- Carver-Roehl
 - Earth Day Trash Pick-Up Challenge (April 13-27)
 - Earth Day Guided Nature Walk (April 22)- Gibbs Lake
 - Cicada Celebration (June 6)- Rock River Heritage Park
 - July Photo Challenge (July 1-31)
 - Rock County 4-H Fair (July 23-28)- parks booth located under grandstand
 - Fall Fun Challenge (September 22 – October 31)
 - Night Owl Hike (November 16)- Rock River Heritage Park
 - Unplug and Explore Challenge (November 16-30)
 - Wednesday Walks with ADRC- Carver-Roehl (May 8), Happy Hollow (June 19), Magnolia Bluff (June 26), Lee (July 31), Rock River Heritage Park (August 7) and Gibbs Lake (October 9)
 - Storywalk®- Nine walks at seven different parks
 - Popsicles at the Park- last Thursday of each summer Storywalk®
 - The Elves are back for December- follow their adventures on social media
- Social Media
 - Facebook- started with 3,766 followers and 2,869 likes, ending with 5,287 followers and 3,485 likes
 - Instagram- started with 1,109 followers, ending with 1,143 followers
- Friends Groups
 - Friends of Beckman Mill- Opening Day, Mill Tours, Ice Cream Social, Heritage Sunday, donation of playground equipment and funding for boardwalk ramp
 - Friends of Carver-Roehl- summer field trip, Fall Fest, stocked Little Library, emptied trash, donated prizes for events, paid to repair pavilion roof
 - Friends of Rock County Parks- Candlelight Hike, Southeastern Bike Ride, perimeter trail work at Rock River Heritage Park, workdays at multiple parks, donated funding for Beckman Mill boardwalk ramp
 - Ice Age Trail Alliance- helped at candlelight hikes and trail workdays, blazed segment at Gibbs Lake and working on Magnolia Bluff
 - Rock County Multi-Use Trail Group- hosted tack swap, trail workdays, donated multi-use yield signs for horse trails, elected a new Board of Officers
 - Rock River Heritage Park Friends- Candlelight Hike, Solar Eclipse Event, Fall into Fall, volunteer workdays
 - Rock Trail Coalition- advocates for biking and hiking trails in Rock County, Pedal the Peace Trail, workdays/cleanup on Peace Trail

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Minutes of the Rock County Public Works Committee
December 10, 2024

- Upcoming in 2025
 - Candlelight Hikes- February 15, 2025, at Magnolia Bluff (6-8pm) and February 22, 2025, at Rock River Heritage Park (6-8pm)

Review of Payments

- A. November 2024 Payments: Mr. Jorgenson answered questions from the Committee.

Next Meeting Date and Time

- A. Parks Meeting: Tuesday, January 14, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. at the Department of Public Works.
- B. Highway Meeting: Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. at the Department of Public Works.

Adjournment: Supervisor Pennycook moved adjournment at 9:21 a.m., seconded by Supervisor Homan. ADOPTED.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda McElroy, Administrative Professional II

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Candlelight Hikes 2025



- **Friday, January 3rd** Janesville School Outdoor Lab
3550 W County Road A, Janesville
- **Saturday, January 11th**. Rock County Chapter Ice Age Trail at
Storrs Lake Wildlife Area. E Storrs Lake Road, Milton.
- **Saturday, February 8th**. Friends of Rockport Park. At Rockport
Park 2801 Rockport Rd, Janesville.
- **Saturday, February 15th** Friends of Rock County Parks. Magnolia
Bluff County Park. 4002 N Croak Road, Evansville
- **Saturday, February 22nd** Heritage Park Friends. Rock River
Heritage County Park. 5801 N River Rd, Janesville

All events are 6 – 8pm.

**Feature beautiful candlelit trails, bonfires, hot chocolate,
s'mores and much, much more.**

Donations gratefully accepted for improvement of the parks.