

Allegan County Parks Advisory Board



Allegan County Parks, Recreation &
Tourism
3283 122nd Ave
Allegan, MI 49010
269-686-9088
parks@allegancounty.org
<http://www.allegancounty.org>

Chairperson: Pam Brown
Vice Chairperson: Joshua Driscoll

PARKS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING – MINUTES

Pam Brown
616-490-1627
Allegan

Tuesday, February 4, 2025@ 8:30am
County Service Building – Board Room -3283 122nd Ave, Allegan, MI 49010
Virtual Option: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88462826214>

John Clark III
269-274-2736
Allegan

CALL TO ORDER: Brown called to order at 8:31am.

**Mark
DeYoung**
616-318-9612
Dorr

ROLL CALL:

Present: Pam Brown, Joshua Driscoll, Kevin Formsma, Jaclyn Hulst, John Clark III, Joisah Lampen, Tom Jessup

Absent: Mark DeYoung,

Also Present: Brandy Gildea, Heather Stormzand

**Joshua
Driscoll**
616-218-5797
Hamilton

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

- **Chairman:** A nomination was made by Driscoll, seconded by Hulst to elect Brown as the Chairman of the Parks Advisory Board for 2025. The motion carried.
- **Vice-Chairman:** A nomination was made by Brown, seconded by Jessup to elect Driscoll as the Vice-Chairman of the Parks Advisory Board for 2025. The motion carried.

**Kevin
Formsma**
616-886-7030
Hamilton

Jaclyn Hulst
616-834-2436
Zeeland

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion made by Hulst seconded by Driscoll to approve the December 3, 2024 minutes. The motion carried.

Tom Jessup
269-637-3374
South Haven

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None.

**Josiah
Lampen**
616-610-4646
Allegan

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS: Hulst explained MI Healthy conference run through the government promoting outdoor health and cleanliness of out outdoor and climate. This was added to the agenda #5. Conference in Detroit April 22, 23

Don Olandorf
269-208-9286
Fennville

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: A motion was made by Formsma seconded by Driscoll to approve the agenda by adding the MI Healthy conference to the agenda under discussion as item # 5. The motion carried.

PRESENTATIONS: NONE

PARK ADMINISTRATION UPDATES:

- Gildea introduced new member, Josiah Lampen, and then had everyone introduce themselves to the new member.

- Gildea honored John Clark III for his work with disc golf. John was invited 3DG-CON Disc Golf Course Design Conference by its members for the work he has done to get a disc golf course started at Littlejohn Lake Park. He honored Allegan County Parks for promoting and taking an interest in disc golf.
- Gildea then discussed updates at multiple parks. Snowshoeing has been popular at Littlejohn and Bysterveld. The program went well through ODC in Bysterveld this year with their snowshoeing event.
- All seasonal staff are planning to return for the 2025 season

REVIEW ITEMS:

1. Financial Statements

- a. Review Quarter Revenue Comparisons:

Gildea went over the park's financial statements and the revenue comparison data found in the agenda packet:

- Reviewing 2024:
 - New Richmond: fees at launch down still and in part due to visitors are not paying.
 - Littlejohn: pavilion usage and rentals up
 - Gun Lake: launch fees down not sure reason, possibly increase in Gun Lake keycards
 - Dumont: launch fees are down due to water quality
 - Ely Lake: more horse riders and fees for trails and camping continue to be up. Continue to be full and busy
 - Silver Creek: trail fees are average
 - West Side: average pavilion usage
- Looking into 2025
 - is starting slower than the past few years due to the colder and snowier winter
 - season pass notifications emails and letters were sent out and they are starting to be sold

RECOMMENDATION/ACTION ITEMS:

1. Park Advisory Board Meeting Schedule Change

A Motion was made by Clark, seconded by Driscoll to approve the moving the Tuesday, April 1, 2025, regularly scheduled Parks Advisory Board meeting to Tuesday, April 15, 2025. The motion carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. **Park Metrics** – Discuss and analyze the latest data and performance metrics collected from Allegan County Parks to assess park usage, maintenance needs, and overall performance.

Gildea presented sixteen different spreadsheets to show how she tracks information to determine the usage and needs of the park. Key discussions from this information are:

- Season Pass purchases were explained and Hulst brought up a non-resident/resident rate to try moving forward.

- Gildea explained that the \$25 is not paying for launch fees and she would like to break up usage by equestrian/boat launch usage
 - Driscoll discussed possible rate increases minimal for residents and more for non-residents.
 - Driscoll would like to adopt a rate increase structure for fees based on rec pass the State of MI uses.
 - Lampen explained that the state uses inflation rates to determine increases.
- Gildea discussed occupancy for Silver Creek and Ely Lake specifically looking at Memorial through Labor Day weekends. This goal is to have 75% occupancy for this time period.
 - Hulst asked if the cost to maintain equals the cost to charge per night, to which Gildea explained that yes, the fees are determined by maintenance, staffing, and other costs associated with maintaining the park/campsites.
- Gildea discussed Watercraft occupancy which are based on budget and trends. These fees are significantly under the cost of maintaining the launches. Any improvements to the launches or parks would help to increase usage. These would help increase the occupancy goals as well.
 - Brown asked if the DNR could help clean up the beach at Ely Lake and that would help usage.
 - Driscoll and Gildea explained that the DNR only has a wildlife division in Allegan County. We would need to contact a recreation department for this issue.
 - Driscoll asked about land at New Richmond and Ely Lake contracts and when those agreements expire.
 - They will expire in 2031.
- Formsma asked for all this data to be emailed or shared somehow before meetings.
 - Parks Admin to look into how to share data with a county Share-point site that the group could all easily access

2. **2025 Forestry Grant** (for Fiscal Year 2026) – Begin planning for the 2025 Community Forestry Grant application by developing strategies for tree planting, ongoing maintenance, and educational initiatives in developed park areas.

Gildea presented the website for the forestry grant that would need to be applied for in the Summer. This grant could go for tree planting and education programs. This grant will not cover the management plan for forestry (large areas). A plan will first need to be developed before even applying for the grant. Gildea would like to know if developing this plan is a priority and would like to do this with a subgroup.

Discussion occurred about ideas for a plan:

- 14 trees came out at Gun Lake for Ash Beetle infestation so planting trees could be something to look at.
- Trees are needed near playgrounds and open areas at Bysterveld.
- Hulst, Driscoll and Lampen in favor and can support an education plan to study what trees are at the parks.

- Hulst explained that a study at all parks can get large so maybe determine 1 park to support planting new trees.
- Gildea and Hulst thought Bysterveld would be a good park to support planting 10-15 trees.
- It was determined that Hulst and Lampen would work with parks staff on a plan. They will research what trees are present, what trees may be needed and costs. Brown thought she could call a local nursery to get a price for various trees.

3. **Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Newsletter** – Review the draft and structure of the upcoming Parks, Recreation, and Tourism newsletter, ensuring it effectively communicates updates, events, and initiatives to the community.

Gildea presented the draft newsletter for review. Explained that we would put an ad in the paper and social media to introduce and get subscribers. On the Parks website, there will be spot where people can subscribe to a newsletter.

- The Parks Board was in favor of a newsletter and liked the idea.
- Formsma has a suggestion to put it in order just a little different with the updates and events first with a highlight of volunteer's 3rd.
- Hulst suggested keeping a spreadsheet of what areas and businesses were presented in the newsletters
- Driscoll thought this could generate revenue for Parks with businesses sponsoring ads in it.
 - Gildea expressed that this is something that we are not looking at now but could down the road.

4. **Developing Friends of the Allegan County Parks Group** - Explore strategies for forming a volunteer-based support group to promote community engagement and advocacy for Allegan County Parks.

Gildea explained that there is a need to develop a group that can promote parks and assist with fundraising.

- Driscoll explained to the group that only someone who is not getting paid by the organization that is requesting a milage can promote. This would mean that anyone from the Parks Board could when they are not in a board meeting.
- Hulst thought that we could reach out to Season Pass holders because they are vested in the parks.
- Formsma wondered if we can partner with an existing 503C group that can help raise funds. Ottawa County has the Parks Foundation or the friends of Ottawa County Parks as an example.
- Driscoll thinks it needs to grow organic through a Facebook page for friends of Allegan County Parks. Possibly Allegan County Community Foundation can help as well.
- Jessup stated he thought that getting a group for the entire county would be difficult as more people join groups for specific interests.

- At this time the parks board did not make any decisions on how to move forward with this. Many are still interested in waiting to hear the community survey results about people's interest in supporting the parks. More discussion is needed.

5. **MI Health Climate state program** to combat greenhouse gasses in the state of MI.

Hulst went over the goals of the MI Health Climate and stated that there is a Conference in Detroit (April 22-23, 2025) where additional information could be learned. She believes that the county and the parks could benefit from this information and would like to be sent to this conference. Gildea expressed that the parks does not have it in the budget to send someone to this conference this year, nor do we have it prioritized to do these types of projects.

A motion was made by Jessup seconded by Clark to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to fund a representative from the Parks Advisory Board to attend the 2025 Mi Health Climate Conference in Detroit up to \$250. Passed with roll call vote. Yes – 7 votes. No – 0 Votes. Absent - 1

Y Pam Brown	Y Kevin Formsma
Y John Clark	Y Jaclyn Hulst
Y Tom Jessup	A Mark DeYoung
Y Josiah Lampen	Y Joshua Driscoll

NOTICE OF PARK ADVISORY BOARD APPOINTMENTS:

- Vacancy: One

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- Parks Operation Plan
- Review Parks Ordinance 1010.1

ROUND TABLE:

Clark: Grateful for the ability to be on the Littlejohn Disc Golf project. Thanked the Parks Board for the opportunity.

ADJOURNMENT: Next Meetings:

- Regularly Schedule Parks Meeting: April 15th @ 8:30 am in County Service Building – Board Room -3283 122nd Ave, Allegan, MI 49010

A motion was made by Driscoll, seconded by Jessup to adjourn the meeting at 11:42am. The motion carried.