

Leelanau County Parks and Recreation Commission
Veronica Valley Park Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 1, 2023
Leelanau County Government Center, Suttons Bay, Michigan
Tentative Minutes – Meeting Recorded
<https://www.leelanau.gov/meetingdetails.asp?MAId=2484>

The Veronica Valley Park committee meeting was called to order at 1:31 p.m. by Committee Chairman, Dave Barrons.

Chairman Barrons deferred the “Pledge of Allegiance” to the Parks and Recreation Commission’s Regular Meeting directly following this meeting.

Roll Call: Dave Barrons, *Committee Chairman*
Steve Christensen (*Absent*)
John Popa
F. Jon Walter

Staff Present: Laurel Evans, Executive Assistant

Guests Present:
None.

Approval of Agenda and Late Additions/Deletions:

Motion by Walter to approve the agenda, as presented. Seconded by Popa.

Discussion – None.

Ayes – 3 (Walter, Barrons, Popa)

No – 0 Absent – 1 (Christensen)

Motion Passes.

Public Comment:
None.

Action Items –

Invasive Species Management – Pond Report Update by Heather Hettinger, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR):

Barrons informed the group that he wants to suspend the recommendation that was made at the February 7, 2023, Veronica Valley Park committee meeting to recommend to the Parks and Recreation Commission to approve the 2023 pond management contract with Savin Lake Services dated January 20, 2023, in the amount of \$2,325.00. Barrons said that Heather Hettinger, MDNR Fisheries Biologist, is concerned about losing all the weeds versus only the invasive ones (this was a previous outcome) and supported an alternate method using pellets as a spot treatment. Because Bradley is a licensed applicator, Bradley could treat the ponds. Barrons added that the contract with Savin Lake Services is not due back until April 15, 2023, and that he would like to use that time to coordinate with Lake Leelanau Lake Association (LLLA) and to gather more input from Hettinger. (LLLA’s Lonnie Rademacher sent a letter to

Popa's attention dated December 15, 2022, regarding invasive species of Curley-leaf Pondweed and Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) that was identified in the ponds at Veronica Valley Park and offered LLLA's expertise in assessing and eliminating the weeds.) Before making the commitment with Savin Lake Services to treat the weeds, Barrons wanted to explore the option of self-management. Barrons reminded the group of an earlier comment by Popa who said "we are not trying to manage a first-class fishery," so, he said, we need to be clear about what we are trying to do with the ponds.

Barrons confirmed that Hettinger will be attending the April 5, 2023, Parks and Recreation Commission regular session and will do so via Zoom.

Popa inquired and Barrons responded that he plans to tell the Parks Commission at today's meeting that he wants to "go slow" on proceeding with a contract with Savin Lake Services. Popa asked what "go slow" meant. Barrons responded that he wants to wait until the April meeting of the Parks Commission to make a recommendation. Popa advised to keep the update at today's Parks Commission meeting brief or not to mention it at all until a firm decision is made for a recommendation. Barrons said Savin Lake Services can treat the pond with pellets, but, to save money, he wanted to explore doing the work in-house. He added that he was unsure if there were permit requirements. Barrons said he would talk with Bradley about performing the work. Popa said he would talk with Ron Reimink, Biologist with LLLA, because LLLA supported treatment of the weeds by spraying. Popa wanted to ask him about the alternate method of treating with pellets.

Barrons shared that Hettinger thought EWM contamination was more attributed to unwashed boats recreating on Lake Leelanau and that contamination coming from the ponds at Veronica Valley Park was not as plausible. Barrons thought educating the public using signage at the park would be helpful in containing the spread of invasive species.

Barrons asked the group about the overall goal of managing the ponds. He said Hettinger's thoughts were that the ponds should be adequately managed and stocked (with hybrid blue gills, bass) for Kids' Fish Day and to promote year-round fish survival; not to be a managed fishery. Popa thought the goal should be to maintain healthy ponds for fishing and public enjoyment; contain bank erosion; and continued weed management. Barrons said he would look into the parks' five-year plan to determine if it includes a goal or statement for managing the ponds. Barrons stated that they need volunteers to help manually rake weeds from the pond, but that he was unsure how to seek out assistance.

Spring Tree Planting Update:

Barrons reported that approximately 60 replacement trees are being ordered to replace trees that were lost in the enclosures, as well as 9 trees that will be planted throughout the park. Tom Adams, Conservation District Resource Specialist, is managing the order. Barrons said he will coordinate with Ross to gather volunteers to help plant the seedlings which will happen sometime in May (2023).

Parking Lot Design:

Barrons reported that Bradley thought the parking lot design should be scaled down to mitigate plowing and maintenance. Design “D” was the favored design of the four designs. Walter reported that Design D, though a scaled down, had the largest area of the four designs, and still maintained efficiency with regard to plowing, grading, and potentially paving at some point. He said the most important factor of the design was safety; pedestrians do not cross a vehicular traffic lane. Design D incorporates a 43-foot turning radius for busses and 18 parking spaces, reduced from the current 55 spaces. Popa supported a pavilion (Barrons preferred to call the pavilion the “picnic enclosure”) at the park versus spending money to pave the parking lot. Barrons concurred, adding that the current objective is to get the general design of the parking lot so the imminent installation of portable toilets could be determined and the final upgrade to the parking lot is documented for future improvements. The group decided to simply report at today’s Parks Commission meeting on the current status of the work they are conducting and that Plan D is the direction they are heading, with no formal recommendation at this time.

Barrons was unsure if improvements to the portable toilets at Veronica Valley was budgeted for 2023 and he said he would later talk with Christensen on the topic; however, he solicited the group to define what “improvements” looked like. Improvements discussed included installing the toilets on a cement pad; making them easily accessible for the service trucks; and insuring universal access.

2:13 p.m. – The group took a brief recess.

2:19 p.m. – Meeting resumed.

Barrons asked to document the following action from today’s committee meeting:

By consensus of the committee, there was concurrence that Design D was the preferred design for the Veronica Valley parking lot.

Barrons said he would contact Paul Barber, Savin Lake Services, to ask about pushing back the contract deadline of April 15, 2023, in order to work around the Board of Commissioners’ meetings and to allow more time to decide on how to proceed with weed management in the ponds.

Barrons asked that Popa, Walter, and Bradley meet to scout out the location of the pad for the portable toilets. Barrons will schedule a committee meeting prior to the April 5, 2023, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to discuss the findings for the pad location. Barrons added that he will invite Hettinger to attend the meeting as well.

Public Comment:

None.

Board Member Comment:

Popa said he would like a statement on the status of trapping beavers at the ponds at Veronica Valley Park. Barrons said he had no update.

Motion to Adjourn:

Chairman Barrons called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Popa to adjourn. Seconded by Walter.

Ayes – 3 (Popa, Walter, Barrons)

No – 0 Absent -1 (Christensen)

Motion Passes.

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:41 p.m.

Lori Eubanks, Recording Secretary