



**Clark County Park District
Regular Monthly Board Meeting
December 19, 2019
6:00 p.m.**

- 1. Call To Order**
 - a. Commissioner Richards called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- 2. Roll Call**
 - a. Commissioners in attendance were Jeff Wallace, Randy Blankenship, Joey Ewing, Jana Williamson, Roy Sweet, Jeff Trefz, and John Richards. Also in attendance were Executive Director Jeff Tippett, Office Manager Danielle Brown, and Tom Hintz from IDNR.
- 3. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 4. Approval of Agenda**
 - a. Wallace motioned to approve the agenda. Blankenship second. 7 ayes, 0 nays. Motion carried.
- 5. Approval of Minutes**
 - a. Regular Monthly Board Meeting Minutes 11-21-19
 - i. Sweet motioned to approve the Regular Monthly Board Meeting Minutes dated 11-21-19. Blankenship second.
 - ii. Richards asked for further discussion. He stated that on page 9, it says "golf cart proposal" and it should read "golf course proposal."
 - iii. Sweet amended his motion to cover the mentioned verbiage that needed to be changed. Blankenship second. 7 ayes, 0 nays. Motion carried.
- 6. Public Comment**
 - a. Lisa Thomas stated she just wanted to thank them all for serving and to wish them all a very Merry Christmas.
- 7. Director's Report**
 - a. Tippett stated that basically all of the campsites have electric and water to them. The electric has been redone in C section, more water lines have been added to the back of C section back by Grump. They wanted 4 more across the back, it turned out real well, we just turn them on when we feel like it.
 - b. Tippett reported that at the new cabin, they went and pulled off the front of that New Cabin and all of the ledger boards and seal plates and the header were rotted out. They had to put in new ones, it was quite a deal. They are going to end up redoing the deck that is at ground level and they are going to use steel to side it rather than wood so that this doesn't happen again.
 - c. Tippett commented that they have received official confirmation of the OHV Grant. We should be closed up within 30 day and be on our way.
 - d. Tippett commented that PDRMA sent us a \$500 check for our continuous efforts at loss prevention.



- e. Tippett stated that he hope that they all saw the new sign that was made and they put up out at the front.
- f. Tippett reported that they were able to fit another campsite in down where Washburns are, there is actually enough room. They dug it out and put stone on it, it will actually be an ADA campsite.
- g. Wallace asked if there was anything happening with the pits to which Tippett responded that Snearly was out here yesterday. We went down there and looked at it again, opened it up and there was about 3 feet of water in it, just gray water, so he pumped it out and it was too cold for him to go down in there. After the first of the year, they are expecting some better weather, looking at the long range forecast, he will go down there and clean it out, and see what happens. He won't even give him a guess as to what it is. Wallace then asked if all of the houseboats are off the lake yet to which Tippett responded no, there is still one houseboat still on the lake. The people who are pulling them for us, their truck is broke. They have one of those little house trailer trucks that pulls those things out. The ones that are out went through Rob Wellum, one he passes and the other one did not. That is because the transom came off when it came out of the water. The one that is owned by the same person has already failed. Wellum went down and inspected it on the water and he said no. When it comes out it will be out, too.

8. Payment of Bills

- a. Ewing motioned to pay the bills. Trefz second.
- b. Ewing asked for further discussion. He asked what Gibson is to which Tippett responded that it is the telephone system, it is the warrantee on the telephone system so if something goes wrong with it we can call them to fix it. Ewing asked if this is new because he doesn't remember seeing it. Tippett commented that we bought that two or three years at a time and Ewing clarified that they don't see that monthly, just quarterly or yearly to which Tippett responded yes. Ewing then asked what they rented from JJet to which Tippett responded a mini hoe to dig around the tanks and a trencher to put in the water lines.
- c. Wallace commented that Tippett had mentioned to him that the Enerstar bill was going up to which Tippett responded it is, it's going up to \$327 a month. Ewing clarified that we are on budget billing to which Tippett commented we are and Wallace clarified that this is because the rates went up, it is not because we used more electricity to which Tippett responded that it is because the rates went up.
- d. Wallace aye, Blankenship aye, Ewing aye, Williamson aye, Sweet aye, Trefz aye, Richards aye. 0 nays. Motion carried.

9. Old Business

- a. None

10. New Business



- a. Discussion Tom Hintz Plant life for erosion
- i. Hintz thank them for inviting him and introduced himself and that he is the site superintendent for Lincoln Trail State Park. He has worked for the IDNR for around 16 years. Before that he was working as an ecological restoration consultant in the Chicagoland Area doing a lot of erosion control work, prairie restoration, prairie burns, forest restoration, and he did this across the whole Midwest. It was a nice job but it was a lot of traveling.
 - ii. He commented that he was able to see some of Mill Creek's shoreline before, the erosion trouble you are having here. You are not alone in your struggle, there is shoreline erosion everywhere. Whether you have a small lake or a large lake, water always wins. There are a lot of things that you can do, a lot of tools for your toolbox, to work with.
 - iii. He discussed the slope of the banks, there are a lot of lakes in this area that were man made, which makes them difficult to maintain. They have that at Lincoln Trail and they have that at Walnut Point, they have areas where they have blowouts. There is all sorts of different ways to fix them. In an ideal world you could come back and cut the bank back and give it a better slope, but sometimes you just can't do that, you don't have the room. There are other things that you can do as well.
 - iv. He stated that the first thing that he will encourage the park to do is to start restoring native plants to those slopes. Putting rip rap along the shores on the base is a band aid. You are going to have to constantly do that over and over again. Doing brush removal, invasive plant and shrub removal is one remedy that can be done right now, in house. You can get volunteers to do it. Prescription burns are the best tool that you have in your toolbox to bring back your native understory. One of the things that they did at Walnut Point. They had several large trees that were shading the shoreline quite a bit, they have great fisheries there, and they were seeing that the dissolved oxygen level was going down in the lake and there was a lot of erosion along the shoreline. What they did was took close to 500 trees out and dropped them into the lake. There were 3 benefits to doing this. Number one, it opened up more sunlight to the shore which stimulated more native plants to grow because some of those trees were maple trees and they shaded out and you couldn't get native plants to grow under them. Number 2, it gave structure to fish. There is a lot of areas to go fishing. It looked terrible at first and they got a lot of complaints, if you do something like that you will get complaints. So if you get your ducks in a row as far as an explanation like they did to. It also brought back the dissolved oxygen levels, too. For 3 or 4 years they had to add minerals to the lake to bring back the dissolved oxygen



levels in that lake. Mill Creek doesn't have that problem, it is a big lake. The toe of the slope and the shoreline will only hold up so far if the upland part and your slope is not secured with native plants. One million gallons falls per acre per year here in the Midwest. So if you have bare dirt on your shores and shady slopes, all you are going to get is more erosion, all of that soil is just going to keep going into the lake. It is very difficult to maintain that, you are just going to keep getting more and more silt going in there. You are going to have to get rip rap on a regular basis and it is just going to sink in there. You are going to have to secure that slope and that shoreline. Sometimes you have to plant the native plants, and sometimes you already have the native plant root mass and the seeds are there and it just starts coming back. Some of the plants you can seed and sow with your hands and they come up like magic. It is a really good thing to do. The prairie plants that require 100% sunlight, like the fountain grass, they have a lot of that in their prairie plantings at Lincoln Trail. They say that 15% of the plant is above ground, 85% is below ground which means that is all roots. For every ounce of beautiful grass that you have up top, you have 5.66 ounces of root mass below ground. Every three years, those roots die and recycle themselves. That is literally taking carbon dioxide out of thin air and putting it into the plant through photosynthesis and then putting it back into the ground. Talk about carbon sequestration, our Illinois prairie plants are the best for that in the entire world, hands down. He commented that there are plants that you can buy, potted plants that are readily available. You will see them come up and they will hold the soil really well. You have to prepare that ground and you will have to open up more sunlight onto that surface by taking down some trees. It could be a specific age class of trees, maple trees are a lot smaller. A lot of times when you do a prescribed burn it does that for you. It doesn't kill the maple trees totally, but it does open up the sunlight to your slope which is really important.

- v. There are other things that you can do with erosion control, he called his old coworker from V3, Keith Jones, and asked him to send him some pictures of some of the work that they use to do. He is not marketing for them, they do not come down this way. He sent him a bunch of photos of common practices that these companies are using across the Midwest. You can probably do all of this yourselves. They started using coir logs, and that might be a good thing for you to start using here. It is coconut fiber and it is the neatest stuff in the world. Two guys can carry coir logs that are about 50 feet long. They weigh next to nothing. They have jute rope that connects it together and you put it at the toe of the slope, and



you take ground stakes and you pound it in. Then you can actually put native plants in that coir log and it catches all of the siltation at the base of it. Whether or not that will work in all areas of Mill Creek Lake, he doesn't know, but there might be some areas that it would be helpful. He can tell you, that turf grass does not help with the erosion. If you want to go and catch more of the water, turf grass just shoots that water to the lowest point. The native grass has very deep root systems and they will hold the soil and absorb more water. There might be some areas where you want to get rid of some of the turf grass, because its root system only does down 2 inches at the very most, some of the other native grasses can go down 15-30 feet down at times. That is very important too.

- vi. He continued by showing pictures. He showed before and after photos of a river bank restoration. He pointed out that the ground preparation was very important, the ground has to be in good shape. He pointed out that there were not a whole lot of showy plants along this shoreline. There are native plants that are showy, if you show the public that you are planting these plants and that they are good for erosion, they are going to want to see some pretty flowers. He will get to that a little later on. In this picture is a lot of sedges. They are grass like plants, they are not grasses, their genus is carex. They love to grow in wet areas, there is over 300 species in the State of Illinois and a vast majority of them will grow in wet woodlands or wet woodlands or ponds, and such. They have very deep root systems and they are work horses. The next picture showed that they used rip rap at the base but they also used plants and reshaped the slope. One of the things that Keith told him, was that in areas where there is a lot of bounce, areas where the water will go up 5 or 6 feet and then the water drains down again, that calls for different measures. The coir logs that he was telling them about, those would be a bad place for them. A better solution is willows. Willows are an amazing shrub, there's a lot of different willows in the State of Illinois and those particular ones are sandbar willows. They go in and pound them into the ground and the roots take off and spread. That adds a lot of structure to the shoreline and is good for fishing, too. They get really thick and they really hold the soil. After 2 years, the shoreline has a lot of plants that are coming up, so of them are from seed and some plant plugs. He discussed the native hibiscus, it can grow along the shoreline, it has a really deep root system and looks spectacular in July and August. The Cherokee believe that it is a cure for breast cancer and when he went to work at V3, he asked why they weren't planting these on the shoreline plantings. They got a lot of them in and they came up like gangbusters.



There are a lot of different possibilities for your shoreline here that will look really nice and are really good for wildlife. The red winged black birds, when they come in February, they love to eat seeds off the top of that, it has a big seed head and it gives them some nice food.

- vii. He showed another picture showing erosion matting. The erosion matting was made of coir log in some of the areas, it might be useful in some spots on Mill Creek, he would have to look at it.
- viii. He referred to the brochure that he brought and encouraged them to take a look at it.
- ix. He stated that basically the bottom line that he is going to tell them is that if they are going to do rip rap alone, they are going to be spending more money on rip rap over the next 30 years. Rip rap does not produce babies, native plants produce babies. They drop seeds, they spread, and if you do it right, you plant them once. You come back and do some weeding and do some burning and they spread like gangbusters. He is not saying don't use rip rap, but don't use it alone. You are just going to keep spending money on that. Maybe there would be an area that you guys might want to take a look at and work on an inaugural project. He would be more than willing to come out and help with that. He knows that the boy scouts have done some work out here and that's stuff that they can do. You don't have to twist their arm to jump in the water or swing a hammer.
- x. Wallace asked in some of the areas where rip rap was place about 10-12 years ago and it has silted in behind it, would those be good areas to start? Hintz responded that yes, putting some coir logs behind that rip rap would be nice and some of those willows would be nice, too. Wallace commented that there is a base that has worked in and leveled out. Hintz commented that his friend Keith, the coir logs were just starting to be used in the United States. They are made of coconut fibers. He was saying that in some places where they were using the coir logs didn't last because the logs alone are not going to hold that. The more flat areas that are eroding away, the logs are able to hold that along with the native plants. Rip rap has its use but you still have to have plants to go in and support that rip rap.
- xi. Tippett asked if the Russian Olives are having an effect to which Hintz responded it is. It is not supposed to be here and it produces little olives and the birds eat them and poop the little seeds everywhere, that is your biggest foe. Also, the honeysuckle is really bad. It has an aleopathic effect on the soil below it. It kills everything in the soil below it. You get under honeysuckle in an area that is the size of this room, 7 or 8 honeysuckle shrubs in here, you are only see moss at the bottom. You



won't see any native plants, you won't see any rabbits, you won't see any birds, you won't see anything. They are invasive plants and they are trying to get rid of all of the invasive shrubs in Lincoln Trail and burning is the best tool. You guys have houses along these slopes, it is still doable or you contract that out to somebody. They take all of the precautions, they take out insurance, they do the job.

- xii. Tippett commented that in some of the areas where they have already laid rip rap have Russian Olive there, would he wish us to take it out right then and there to which Hintz responded that he would just take it out. With the olive trees, you can cut the branches and you can put them in the water on the shoreline. It is going to help, it's not going to hurt laying it down there, but if you don't herbicide the stump all it is going to do is make it angry and it is going to grow 10 new heads and be even thicker. Some of the slopes and areas you have out here, you may not be able to carry a burn at first because of those invasive shrubs. You may have to go in and remove them first. If you guys went around and worked on just the invasive shrubs in the park, that would probably improve things greatly. Blankenship commented that they really don't have a root system, they just lay on top of the ground and take everything, they could pull them out really easy. Hintz commented that they use to use the tractor and wire. They would put the wire around the base and pull it out by the roots with the tractor and haul it off. There's a lot of different ways to do that too. There are 1000's of native plants that you can buy in seed and plug form that you can buy and beef up your shorelines and beef up your slopes. Bioengineering is the way to go.
- xiii. Richards asked about deer and the rise and fall of the water, the willows will tolerate that won't they to which Hintz responded yes. He doesn't know if Mill Creek has that much bounce to the water to which Wallace commented that it has come up 4 feet over night. Hintz commented that you might want to get ahold of a hydrologic engineer for the different, they could actually do a model for you. They can look at a 100 year flood and show you where your level would be, there might be plants that you wouldn't want to plant in specific area because they might be under water in April for two weeks and then your plants are gone. There is planning that goes into that. Get rid of the olive. Richards asked about the deer to which Hintz commented that they have all lived together for a thousand years. He referred to one of the pictures that you will notice that in some of the plantings, that they have put in posts and put string across so that geese won't get in there. You will probably want to do that to keep the geese out of there, because they are just geese. They just walk and poop and be destructive. Having it shielded off with chick wire



is helpful. If the Board would like for him to come out this summer, they will look at a spot that they could work on.

- xiv. Wallace commented that the biggest thing that they would face is the wave action from the boats, it just beats it. Until it could get established. Hintz commented that they probably already know of a spot that just takes a beating from the boats. Wallace commented that is the narrowest part of the lake, until it opens back up, it gets beat pretty good. Hintz commented that they used rock rolls in Glen Ellen, where they took pvc and poultry webbing and put river rock on there. They rolled that in and staked that down and then put in the willows. As the wave action hit the rock rolls, it held it for a long time. He hasn't been back to see if it held or not.
- xv. Sweet asked who sells this stuff so they can get a price. He is always worried about the price, the dollars. Hintz responded Prairie Moon Nursery in Minnesota is really good. He doesn't know of too many good nurseries in Illinois anymore, but Prairie Moon is good. Genesis Nursery in Tampico, Illinois, they actually produced a lot of plants for him before. As far as coir log, GSI use to do those for them, but he isn't sure they are still in business anymore, you would have to look them up.
- xvi. Richards asked if they plant that grass higher up like in the feeder streams that drain into the lake, would it help filter silt and stuff like that to which Hintz responded yes. Richards asked if they would have to clear all of that out of the trees to which Hintz responded not all of the trees, but anything that is not native and some smaller age classes of maples. They do shade things out. In the absence of fire, the maples come in. As soon as you bring fire back in there, the maples start to thin out.
- xvii. Wallace asked if there are any areas out at Lincoln Trail where they can see where he has done that to which Hintz responded just the burning and how much the understory has recovered and such. He can just tell them from the burning that they did, the native plants just keep creeping in year after year and up the slope. They are on their 7th year of burning and at one time there were no native plants up there and now they are growing further and further down the slope all the way down to the edge of the lake and it really helps with erosion. At Walnut Point they are in their second year of the tree felling project and it seems to be helping the erosion a lot. That was a big job. Everybody needs to be wearing the PPE's when they are dropping trees. They just had an accident with someone dropping the trees, one of the employees got severely injured. He is ok but he is going to be out for a couple of weeks.

b. Discussion and Vote Tax Levy



- i. Tippett commented that this is a duplicate tax levy from last year. Ewing asked what they did last year, didn't they reduce to which Tippett responded no.
- ii. Wallace commented like Richards had mentioned the night before, most places take a percentage rather than a dollar amount. We take out a dollar amount and as the assessed value of the district keeps going up, the tax rate, percentage rate, has been dropping. He doesn't think there are very many entities out there that are able to do that. He wishes that they could drop it just a little bit, but that is just him, definitely not raise it. Sweet commented that he would like it to be gone. He doesn't believe that it was meant to stay on there forever and the small amount of people who pay the tax who actually use it. He knows that they could come for their recreational opportunities, but a lot of people don't do that. Does he think it is going to happen, no. It would be tough, you would have to run this place like a business then, and maybe that is the route they should go. On the positive side, they aren't trying to raise it. They are trying to live within those means, that's a positive. This endless tax burden, it's not just here, it concerns him. Richards commented that is one of his goals to make the park so profitable that they wouldn't have to do that. He thinks that is probably what a lot of people need to do and he thinks they are making strides to do that. He doesn't think they are there yet. Wallace stated that as far as he knows that the park has never, except when they first opened up they were sitting on funds, the park has never had \$1,000,000 just sitting in the bank. We are getting a lot of improvements done around here that haven't been done in a long time. He is thinking, on down the line, hopefully we can get the boat ramp done, the campground, taking care of a lot of other stuff. He is thinking that they are going to have to get some new buildings built, you have this equipment and you need to get it under a roof. He is somewhat like Roy, in the sense that all of your entities are raising taxes, the State of Illinois is nuts. It is going to be such a burden on the school districts. He thinks about attacking things a lot less, he would like to drop it like \$5,000. That is the only way you are going to do something like this, put your nose to the grind. We couldn't reduce it by \$50,000, not talking about doing anything like that, it would be too dangerous.
- iii. Tippett commented that they have quite a bit, the OHV Grant, projects that they are going to be doing, they are going to need all of the money that they can get. He is with them in lowering the taxes, but this would not be the year to do it. It would cost them \$8,000 and they need it. Richards commented that with the grant, the more money to have to put into it, the more you will be able to reap from it. Tippett commented



that with the grants that they have out, they will be out \$100,000 and \$200,000 waiting on the reimbursement money to come back. Wallace commented that he is scared to death that they are going to have to pay for the whole boat ramp, but they have added campsite, and the OHV Grant pays for itself. But then you have equipment, now we have to maintain it. There is a cost to ownership. Wallace stated that he is just trying to be as responsible as possible and bring it down \$5,000. Blankenship commented that he agrees with him but he doesn't think that this is the time. Richards commented that they are coming off of a down year as well. He would think that if they are able to increase certain areas of this park making money and putting money back into it. If we are improving those areas, and they continue to show a profit after several years, then it would be a good time to entertain that. He thinks it could be a master plan type of deal, 5 years, 10 years down the road, at that point to have the tax burden reduced, like at 5 years down to \$150,000 and then after 10 years it is down to \$100,000. It depends how well they are able to manage what they are getting and how well they are able to parlay that into things that are making the park more self-sufficient. Spending money on erosion control is nice, but they also need to spend it on the things that people are paying for. It's great to be spending money on the campsites, additional opportunities for recreation like the OHV stuff, things that will bring more people here to spend more money.

- iv. Lisa Thomas commented that they need to think about the long term plans on what it is going to take to maintain what is here. You know you are going to have to replace a building after 30 or 50 years. Nowhere has it been planned for to put that money back. And until this park sees its bank account growing and growing, she thinks it would be irresponsible to reduce the tax levy at this time.
- v. Richards commented that is what he is saying. They need to be financially secure enough to be self-sufficient. That's why he is here, to move towards Sweet's idea to do away with the levy completely. It needs to be done incrementally.
- vi. Ewing commented that this needs to reflect in the Master Plan. If they can show positive growth over "x" amount of years, then at that point they could entertain reducing a portion of the levy, whether it is in recreation, whether it is in paving and lighting, whatever. You don't have to 15% the entire thing. You can reduce individual items a percentage. But at this point, with the projects laid in front of them, he just doesn't think they can do it at this time. It is something to put on the Master Plan and work towards it. They have seen positive growth from when he first



came on until now, it has grown. Building it is the easy part, maintaining it is where the money comes in. You can throw \$100,000 at a building, but the roof, walls, everything takes maintenance over time.

- vii. Blankenship motioned to accept the tax levy. Ewing second. Blankenship aye, Ewing aye, Williamson aye, Sweet aye, Trefz aye, Richards aye, Wallace aye. 0 nays. Motion carried.

11. Committee Reports

- a. Campers
 - i. None
 - ii. Cancel January's meeting as it is too close to the holidays.
- b. Lake Management
 - i. None
- c. Finance – 12/16/19
 - i. Trefz reported that they had met last night, they cancelled Monday night due to the weather. They went over the finances and the tax levy. It was short and sweet.
- d. Policy
 - i. None
- e. Trails
 - i. Wallace commented that they did not have one and they are going to cancel the Trails meeting for January as well. He would like to say that the Polar Bear Dare is coming up and that Josh has been out working on the new trail that comes by the cabins towards the Woodlands. They have also been back moving some of the concrete blocks back to where they need them. They are always working back there.

12. Executive Session 5ILCS 120/2 C-1, C-3, C-11, C-21

- a. Ewing motioned to table Executive Session. Wallace second. 7 ayes, 0 nays. Motion carried.

13. Vote to Open/Close Executive Session Minutes 8/15/19

- a. Tabled

14. Adjourn

- a. Wallace motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ewing second. 7 ayes, 0 nays. Motion carried.
- b. Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.