

Minutes of the Meeting: February 6, 2025

Board members present: Brian Wetcher, JoAnn York-Gilmore, Tabb Stringer, Nathan Schwarck, Kit Gerwels

Staff present: Bob Vaux, Jamie Burroughs, Darby Jordan

Meeting held in person and called to order at 6:01PM

Minutes: January minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comments:

None

Forest Plan: 2026 Update Draft Review:

Kit gave an overview of the process and timeline, reviewing the steps that the Board, public and Staff have taken so far. He also laid out the steps to be taken going forward, with Board review of the draft, additional public comment periods and revisions of the draft. It will then end with a Board approved Draft, hopefully in June, to be submitted to Council for approval. This step will also allow for public comment.

He reminded the public that all written comments and the draft plan are posted online.

Members of the audience expressed concern over the process of reviewing the draft and public comments received, inquiring about how Staff decided to accept or reject the comments received.

Discussion was had about the process and timeline as well as the public comment review.

JoAnn gave some feedback about the draft, appreciating the organization of the plan and criteria used in the flora/fauna and wildlife protections.

Brian echoed his appreciation of the organization.

The other Board members expressed their appreciation for the structure.

It was decided that public comments will be taken until March 4th at 5pm for this round of the draft and the Board will review the Plan after public comments are taken at the next meeting or two. Public comments should be sent to Bob who will forward to the Board and staff will post them weekly online. Staff will publicize online, via social media and press releases that comments are being taken.

Friends of the Forest Update:

Ellie was in attendance and reported that the programs are planned and filling quickly. They will run a half day camp during conference week in February.

Adult programs are also running with great attendance. March 1st will be the next volunteer work party. March 4th will be their annual meeting.

Staff Reports:

Bob thanked Ellie for adding to her responsibilities in the absence of and Executive Director at the Friends.

Trees have been coming down on trails and on City property with the winter weather. Staff are working hard to keep up.

No updates on the Whistle Lake dam.

The biggest challenges in the ACFL are regarding enforcement. With no officer on staff dedicated to the forest lands, many people don't follow the rules.

Jamie had nothing to add to his report. Kit expressed thanks to Jamie for his continued work and improvements in the forest lands.

Parks Commission Report:

JoAnn reported that the Commission continues to work with staff and the public on the pickle ball front. The Parks Foundation will be providing the funding to purchase noise dampening curtains. Staff will be fixing the fence and providing additional parking.

Staff is updating policies at the Cemetery to include green burials.

There was a neighborhood meeting on January 30th about the possibility of a park at W 6th and Minnesota. The Mayor and Council have allocated \$50,000 for the planning of this park.

Other Business:

Brian spoke about the Forest Plan and that it is a wish list without an enforcement officer in the ACFL. He encouraged the public to speak to their Council members and ask for funding for a dedicated park officer.

Bob shared that the Police department is supportive of this position, however it is a matter of funding.

Tabb asked about the Heart Lake Master Plan and changes to the parking, specifically regarding horse trailers. At this time the drawing is just a conceptual plan.

Adjourned at 7:18pm

Respectfully Submitted by Darby Jordan