

PORTAGE COUNTY



PARKS DEPARTMENT

Ryan Rose

Parks Director

March 11, 2019

You are hereby notified that there will be a meeting of the **Park Commission** to be held on **Thursday, March 14, 2019 at 5:00 p.m.** at the **Jordan West Lodge** at 1770 Cty Rd Y, Stevens Point, WI 54482.

ADDENDUM

6. Discussion and possible action to change Policy on Standing Rocks Park Single Track.

Notice: A quorum of the Portage County Board of Supervisors, or any committee thereof, may be present at this meeting.

Any person who has special needs and plans on attending this meeting should contact the Portage County Parks Department as soon as possible to ensure that reasonable accommodations can be made. 715-346-1433

Resolution on Proceeding with Single Track Trail Changes at Standing Rocks Park

Whereas:

- Standing Rocks Park offers recreational opportunities for activities that include running, hiking, biking, disk golfing, winter sports, bird watching, berry-picking, and various other forest-based activities; with parts of the park more devoted to more intensive use and parts devoted to more quiet and solitude uses.
- Off-road mountain and fat-tire bicycling is an activity popular with many Portage County residents and visitors.
- Standing Rocks Park hosts this style of bicycling on the long-standing multi-use trail often called the "ski trail", as well as a network of narrow, so-called "single track" trails.
- The Point Area Single Track Association (PASTA) has represented to the Parks Commission that the existing single track trail network is unattractive to and risky for beginning and novice off-road bicyclists, and that a redesigned and rebuilt single-track trail network would be appealing to nonexpert and other users.
- PASTA requests permission to fund-raise, design, and build an improved trail network, some on existing trail alignments and some on new with some segments of existing trail to be abandoned.

Therefore the Portage County Parks Commission:

- approves planning and fund-raising by PASTA, in conjunction with Parks Department staff, for an improved single track bicycling trail network;
- intends to approve construction of the improved single track trail network subject to the submission of an acceptable plan;
- expects that the entire single track trail network will total 10 to 12 miles, with a corridor width not to exceed that required for mechanical mowing using a four wheeler or Gator towing an approximately 4.5 foot wide mower, a bare-dirt width of 18-36 inches, and infrequent berms that do not exceed 18-30 inches in height; as represented by PASTA;
- expects that the trail will be multi-use and will honor the existing "back country" aesthetic of much of Standing Rocks park;
- expects that tree cutting and clearing will be needed, but that these will be minimized, and that good standard practices that minimize erosion and other deterioration will be employed;
- extends its appreciation to PASTA for its efforts to improve recreational experiences in our Parks, fund-raise, plan, and work in conjunction with the Parks Department.

Resolution to Change Policy on Standing Rocks Park Single Track Trail Maintenance

Motion to change the existing policy on single track trail maintenance at Standing Rocks Park from:

“The local mountain bike club will construct, sign, and maintain all single track trails. If this does not occur the single track trails will be closed down,”

to:

“Single track bicycle trails at Standing Rocks Park will be constructed and mostly maintained by the Point Area Single Track Association working cooperatively and with oversight of the Parks Department. The Parks Department will mow, clear downed trees, and perform certain other maintenance activities, subject to the availability of personnel and funding and discretion of the Parks Department Director.”

**Standing Rocks Park Downhill Ski Area:
Input and Advice from Downhill Ski Enthusiasts**

October 2017

George J Kraft

Background

With recent major improvements in the Standing Rocks Park downhill ski facility (snow-making and tows) and an ability to have longer and more consistent ski seasons, Parks Department staff and Park Commissioners have expressed interest in boosting downhill area use and revenue. In addition, an aspiration exists for adding other uses to the downhill area that may compete for space at the facility; i.e., snow tubing.

I undertook interviews with individuals who are downhill ski enthusiasts, or have interest in promoting recreation and tourism that could involve the downhill area. I thank these individuals for their time: Carrie Butt, Sara Brish, John Jury, Rolf Garthus, Barb Garthus, Marcia Locher, and Adam Meshak.

Major Themes

Facilities

1. Coolify the downhill area for greater appeal to youth and families. How? Hang “cool” downhill posters on the inside of the lodge; welcome sign outside the lodge (“Welcome to the ROCKS!”), music piped inside and outside of the lodge.
2. Terrain and sculpting additions to provide a more interesting ski experience.
3. Lighting in concert with developing programs for evening activities. Would WPS pitch in for cost of the lights (John Jury suggestion)?
4. Turning the hill in front of the lodge is a bad idea. Makes the area extra-dinky. Cuts out three runs. The front-of-the-lodge hill is important to the whole operation. (Develop different area for tubing? Develop different area for lost downhill runs?)

Marketing, advertising

5. Recognize our niche: Families, beginning skiers, youth, local folks, but also more distant family/beginner types who can enjoy an economical downhill experience commensurate with their abilities.
6. Promotions. “Six nights at the Rocks gets you a free night at Granite Peak or Norway.” (John Jury suggestion.)

7. Groups to market. Scouts, Boys/Girls Club, schools, churches, large employers. Develop package, design nice promotional material, send or drop off with "in charge" person at these places.

8. Market in Wausau, Marshfield, etc. schools. (Not just Portage County.)

9. Publicity/Advertising. Constant Facebooking: New tow shack, grass being cut in the summer, snow making coming soon, snow is ready.... Develop list for targeted updates.

Events, promotions, activities

10. Events and activities. Family nights (with addition of lights). More sponsored days like Active Portage County, DivePoint days, NASTAR (or NSTAR-like) races, etc. *Build events and specials that attract employers/school/youth groups.* "Learn to ski" days.

11. Youth group special: Attract a youth group of 10-20 skiers. Offer a package where a guide or instructor would meet them prior to opening of the hill, work with park staff to outfit the kids with gear. Give them 1-2-3 hours of instruction on using two, skiing basics, and turn them loose.

How to get it done?

12. Linkage with University ski club for volunteers or low-cost help?

13. Retired or other volunteers either on-snow or with marketing, etc.

14. Hire an intern for marketing and the like and place at CVP?

Suggestions for proceeding

1. "Coolifying" can be done immediately and at small cost.

2. Terrain and snow sculpting can be done immediately and at small cost. Volunteer suggestions can be taken.

3. The youth-group special could be bitten off with a relatively small amount of effort.

4. Small bites of events and activities can be done.

How to make it go forward with the horses we have?

PORTAGE COUNTY PARK COMMISSION
TUBING SUB-COMMITTEE
Initial Meeting
November 9, 2017

The initial Portage County Park Commission Tubing Sub-Committee meeting was called to order at 3:00 P.M. by Portage County employee Ryan Rose at the Standing Rocks Park Chalet.

Members present: Don Butkowski, George Kraft, Jake Barnes and Marcia Locher. Bob Gifford, excused. Also present was Assistant Park Director Ryan Rose.

Rose called the meeting to order at 3:00PM and asked for nominations to chair the meeting.

Moved by Kraft and seconded by Locher to nominate Butkowski to chair the meeting. No other nominations. Motion carried by voice vote.

Moved by Butkowski and seconded by Locher to nominate Kraft as Vice-Chair of the group. No other nominations. Motion carried by voice vote.

Moved by Kraft and seconded by Locher to nominate Barnes as Secretary of the group. No other nominations. Motion carried by voice vote.

Butkowski read the public notice. None

Public Comments. None

Discussion was held regarding the charge to the committee which is to review and prioritize the possible tubing related options at Standing Rocks Park for the actual location of the tubing hill. It was agreed that all tubing options should consist of at least two tubing runs and one return.

Option # 1 – Valley By The Gate Option. This option consists of clearing the ridge to the west of the main parking lot in such a way that tubers would end up by the outer gate with the tubing hill stretching from northwest to southeast. Positives: No impact on downhill runs. Uses a new area of the park. Negatives: Electric and water for snowmaking would need to be brought in. Significant land clearing.

Option # 2 – Straightening of Teddy Bear Ski Run. This option consists of straightening Teddy Bear in such a way that tubers would go straight east northeast out on to Bear Lake. No cornering of the run would be incurred. Positives: Only one seldom used ski run would be impacted. Negatives: Much land clearing would be involved. Electric and water for snowmaking need to be brought in. Possibly the area near the start would have to be raised to get proper grade.

Option # 3 – Grizzly Bear Run. This option would go straight down Grizzly Bear to the northeast and out onto Bear Lake. Positives: Snowmaking is currently available with this

option. Negatives: Two ski runs would be lost with this option. Much land clearing would be involved.

Option # 4 – Smokey Bear Run (in front of chalet). This option would us Smokey Bear in its present form with earthen grooves formed on the hill. In addition, a new run would be created on the west side of the ridge, extending from top to bottom, to compensate skiers for the loss of runs. Positives: Relatively simple as Smokey Bear is pretty well set up for tubing presently. New long run created. No electric or new snowmaking would be needed. Negatives: Loss of three existing ski runs. Much land clearing and bulldozing for the new run.

Discussion was then held regarding the costing of all four options. It was agreed that the Parks Department should pursue rough pricing of all four options for the next meeting of the sub-committee. The next meeting will be scheduled as soon as pricing becomes available.

Lastly, discussion was held concerning skier counts this winter. It was agreed that the Parks Department should periodically survey what hill skiers are using during the winter ignoring skiers on the rope tows.

Moved by Kraft and seconded by Butkowski to adjourn the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Jake Barnes, Committee Secretary

STANDING ROCKS PARK WINTER SPORTS AREA

SITUATION AND STATUS

1/31/2018

George J. Kraft, Commissioner

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to document where we are with Standing Rocks Park Winter Sports area improvements as of 1/9/2018 and to provide continuity for progress into the future.

The Challenge

Plans for the Standing Rocks Park Winter Sports area have been on-again and off-again for well over a decade. The challenges of implementing plans come from multiple directions, but perhaps the drawn out nature of "getting it done" stems mainly from:

- uncertainties about the timing of when improvements and initiatives get funded
- losses of institutional memory that occur with transitions on and off the Parks Commission
- a Parks Department staff that is already are fully-committed and mainly unable to chase new initiatives.

The Parks Commission and staff needs a better way to keep track of plans, goals, and implementation to achieve the potential of the Standing Rocks Park winter sports area, and it is the intent of this document to provide help with that tracking.

Open Ends at Standing Rocks Park regarding Winter Sports.

1. Nordic trails & Dust.

Standing Rocks Nordic trails are a top-notch, destination-quality facility. The trails were threatened in the past by encroachment up to and beyond the park boundary by the aggregate mining operation to the north, and continue to be threatened by episodes of uncontrolled dust emissions that sometimes impairs several kilometers of the trail. (Past summer dust emissions have hindered park use and endangered forest health). The problem goes back well over a decade, and was compounded when issues at the facility were not rectified during an expansion. Planning and Zoning gave the facility permission to install a berm (the apparent source of most of the emissions) that bordered Standing Rocks Park, with P&Z staff verbally representing that the berm would be installed, vegetated, and no longer a problem in a couple years.

From a Nordic trail and park protection perspective, getting the berm completed as soon as possible seems to be the best way to end dust pollution issues.

P&Z states they have limited tools to deal with the facility. At our last meeting with P&Z staff, we discussed possibilities of a nuisance action.

Open issues:

1.1 P&Z staff committed to getting measurements at the berm during Fall 2017 to determine how close they are to final elevations. These have not yet been presented to the Commission.

1.2 P&Z staff committed to reviewing all permits given to the facility for compliance; for instance, do winter grades meet specifications. These have not yet been presented to the Commission.

1.3 Should other actions, such as nuisance actions, be explored if the problems are not rectified?

2. Phase I downhill ski area

Phase I was driven by these considerations:

- Winter snows have become less reliable so open days at the downhill area have been decreasing to virtually none.
- With the loss of open days at the downhill area has come a loss of awareness and use of the facility that needs to be brought back.

Components of Phase I were:

- Achieve snow making capability. We were successful in achieving snow-making capability in a wonderful public-private funding effort. Park staff have shown adeptness in making and grooming manmade snow and the facility is open much more than in the past.
- Install lighting that would allow us to use the facility during weeknights.
- Hold programs and events at the improved facility to increase usage.
- Market the facility to various potential user groups to increase usage.
- Update the facility for a new generation

Progress and open issues:

2.1 Lighting. Right now is not funded.

2.2 Programs and events. We have limited programs and events but not close to what was envisioned. *The citizen comments in the 10/17 report address improvements in this regard (see attached).*

2.3 Marketing. We have very limited marketing of the facility. *The citizen comments in the 10/17 report address improvements in this regard (see attached).*

2.4 Update facility. *The citizen comments in the 10/17 report address improvements in this regard (see attached).*

3. Phase II downhill ski area

Phase II is mainly driven by the desire to add tubing capabilities to the downhill runs. Adding tubing has a trickle-down effect requiring other improvements at the Standing Rocks facility.

Progress and open issues:

3.1 Design, fund, and install a tubing area. This requires choosing a site, shaping a slope, and installing a tow. A citizen input process looked at options for locating the tubing area and what collateral impacts would need to be considered.

3.2 Multi-purpose building construction. A new multi-purpose building would be built on Standing Rocks Rd., and is required for the tubing operation in order to open space for tubers in the existing ski lodge. Nordic users would be shifted from the existing lodge to the new building to open space for tubers. (The multipurpose building would also accommodate other users – runners, mountain bikers, disc golfers, etc. – during summer months.) (Funding has been approved in the capital expense plan.)

3.3 Downhill ski run improvements. Existing ski runs may be impacted by the addition of tubing facilities. This may require “tweaking” of remaining runs, or construction of a new run. A citizen input process looked at options for locating the tubing area and what collateral impacts would need to be considered. These are summarized in the attached.

Summary and Action Items

Dust issue:

1.1 P&Z staff committed to getting measurements at the berm during Fall 2017 to determine how close they are to final elevations.

Action: Get a report from P&Z on berm measurements.

1.2 P&Z staff committed to reviewing all permits given to the facility for compliance; for instance, do winter grades meet specifications.

Action: Get P&Z to report on compliance.

1.3 Does the Park Commission want to explore nuisance actions if the problems are not rectified?

Action: If abatement of issues appears to be going no where, explore other actions.

Phase I downhill:

2.1 Lighting. Right now is not funded.

Action: Develop a lighting plan, find funds, install.

2.2 Programs and events. We have limited programs and events but not close to what was envisioned.

Action: Review *citizen comments in the 10/17 report address improvements in this regard (see attached) and determine potentially feasible actions.*

2.3 Marketing. We have very limited marketing of the facility.

Action: Review *citizen comments in the 10/17 report address improvements in this regard (see attached) and determine potentially feasible actions.*

2.4 Update facility.

Action: Review *citizen comments in the 10/17 report address improvements in this regard (see attached) and determine potentially feasible actions.*

Phase II downhill:

3.1 Design, fund, and install a tubing area. This requires choosing a site, shaping a slope, and installing a tow.

Action: A citizen input process looked at options for locating the tubing area and what collateral impacts would need to be considered. We need to get approximate estimates of costs on the various options, choose one, and move forward.

3.2 Multi-purpose building construction. A new multi-purpose building would be built on Standing Rocks Rd., and is required for the tubing operation in order to open space for tubers in the existing ski lodge. Nordic users would be shifted from the existing lodge to the new building to open space for tubers. (The multipurpose building would also accommodate other users – runners, mountain bikers, disc golfers, etc. – during summer months.) (Funding has been approved in the capital expense plan.)

Action: Proceed with design, bidding and construction.

3.3 Downhill ski run improvements. Existing ski runs may be impacted by the addition of tubing facilities. This may require “tweaking” of remaining runs, or construction of a new run. A citizen input process looked at options for locating the tubing area and what collateral impacts would need to be considered. These are summarized in the attached.

Action: When a tubing run option is chosen, revisit this issue and integrate it into the tubing plan; accomplish both at the same time.

Attached reports from citizen input contain some excellent ideas on how to make progress.

STANDING ROCKS PARK WINTER SPORTS AREA INITIATIVES

UPDATE 3/8/2019

BACKGROUND

The Commission adopted at its March 8 2018 meeting the January 31 2018 *Standing Rocks Park Winter Sports Area Situation and Status* and the *Input and Advice from Downhill Ski Enthusiasts* as its understanding situation, needs, and the Commission's intentions for moving forward. These were adopted as "The Parks Commission and staff needs a better way to keep track of plans, goals, and implementation to achieve the potential of the Standing Rocks Park winter sports area, and it is the intent of this document to provide help with that tracking."

UPDATE

1. Dust pollution.

Item 1.1 P&Z staff committed to get measurements at the berm during Fall 2017 to determine how close they are to final elevations.

Progress: *No report back from P&Z.*

Item 1.2. P&Z staff committed to reviewing all permits given to the facility for compliance; for instance, do winter grades meet county conditions. This review has not yet been presented to the Commission.

Progress: *No report back from P&Z.*

Item 1.3. Other actions.

a. Strategy meeting among parks, P&Z director, County Exec, and Corp Counsel on other actions

Progress: The commission requested that the Parks Director set up a session that would include the P&Z director, County Exec, and Corporation Counsel to discuss strategies to address dust pollution issues from the adjacent properties. This was suggested as a way to proceed by the Director of Planning and Zoning at his last appearance before the Parks Commission.

Some sort of disconnect occurred, and instead of a strategy session the County Exec took the initiative to contact the adjacent landowner directly as well as work with P&Z staff in addressing their previous commitments.

Some communication issues have emerged in terms of new parties getting involved and trying to get their arms around the issue, and we're replotting old ground. Hopefully the new parties we'll get a better grounding shortly and we'll start making progress on the issue.

2. Phase I downhill ski area

2.1 Lighting. Right now is not funded. Other items should be addressed before pursuing lighting.

2.2 Programs and events. We have limited programs and events but not close to what was envisioned. *The citizen comments in the 10/17 report address improvements in this regard (see attached).*

2.3 Marketing. We have very limited marketing of the facility. Marketing, in Kraft's opinion, is critical to making the facility successful and therefore is a high priority. Yet this is a challenge as we are not well equipped to do the marketing that is necessary. *The citizen comments in the 10/17 report address improvements in this regard (see attached).*

2.4 Update facility. *The citizen comments in the 10/17 report address improvements in this regard (see attached).*

3. Phase II downhill ski area

3.1 Design, fund, and install a tubing area. This requires choosing a site, shaping a slope, and installing a tow. A citizen input process looked at options for locating the tubing area and what collateral impacts would need to be considered.

a. Estimate on cut/fill/shaping costs is in progress.

Progress:

Two potential tubing area runs are being investigated.

- Northeast of the lodge and would provide a pretty full, high quality run. Ryan has some preliminary estimates of clearing and shaping this slope. Likely costly!!!

- South of the existing parking lot. This would be more of a "kiddie" run. Lower cost, easier to implement. Questions about whether it would provide an attractive experience. Ryan is investigating and comparing to other facilities in the state.

b. Need to design and cost-out options to remediate downhill ski area losses – nips and tucks, enhancing areas west of existing ski hill

Progress: None needed until a decision is made on tubing location.

3.2 Multi-purpose building construction.

Progress: Bids are in!!

3.3 Downhill ski run improvements. Existing ski runs may be impacted by the addition of tubing facilities. This may require "tweaking" of remaining runs, or construction of a new run.