



Groen Visioning Committee

Friday, November 13, 2009 – 10:00 a.m.
Johannesburg-Lewiston Schools
Media Center – 10854 M-32
Johannesburg, MI 49751

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Harkness called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Roll call — Present: Robert Harkness, John Burt, Jim Hilgendorf, Don Sklarczyk, Matt Nowak, Pam Duczowski, Butch Fleming, Kevin Kennedy, Patricia Osburn

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Committee accepted the minutes of October 6, 2009.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

A. Equestrian Use on Trails

The Committee discussed prohibiting equestrian uses on any trails that are susceptible to erosion. Burt will send a map to Frank Latusek to mark which trails have erosion problems. The map will then be forwarded to Patricia Osburn. The Committee invited Mr. Latusek to attend, but he was not available.

B. Property Signage

Sklarczyk brought up the need for property signage along the property border both to prevent people from trespassing currently, as well as once the property is a Nature Center. Any signs would have to be approved by Mr. Latusek and Mr. Groen. Once the property is a Nature Center signage indicating that access is only through the main gate, would be appropriate. Different language would be needed currently, since directing people to a gate may make it appear that the property is open to the public. The Committee discussed having bright colors and keeping it short so that people can easily read. Burt and Harkness will discuss the wording with a sign company to see if they have any suggestions.

C. Groen Vision Video Tape

The Committee requested a copy of the video tape of Mr. Groen discussing his vision for the property to help ensure that Committee members, as well as future generations, fully understand his desires. Burt spoke with Jim Smith, Mr. Groen's attorney, about the video tape. Mr. Smith indicated that he would provide a copy to the Committee, after he reviews the tape.

D. Historic Information Collections

The Committee discussed the need to collect old photographs and information on the property while they can. The Committee will seek photographs, tape (either video or audio) people's recollections on the property, and seek to establish relationships with Hartwick Pines State Park and Greenfield Village to eventually borrow tools that had originally been used at the property.

The Committee would like to put out a request in the form of a press release. Burt will draft a Press Release and then seek permission to distribute it from Mr. Latusek and Mr. Groen.

Nowak will speak with Bill Kujawa, Sally Kujawa, and Mike Colosimo about their historic information on the property.

Sklarczyk will talk to Helen Clark. He will also try to find someone in the Richards family that had owned the Echo Valley Ranch at one point.

Duczowski will talk to someone with both Hartwick Pines and Greenfield Village.

There is also information available in the book on Johannesburg history by Stuart Welch, as well as a book on Douglas Lake and Johannesburg written by Eugene Ochsner.

Sklarczyk reported that Bailey Sides is considering donating a big wheel that he had building in the same way as it would have been build back in the lumber days. Sklarczyk will see whether he would be willing to donate it to the Nature Center.

Nowak reported that Stacy Jo Miller has an account book that belonged to the Johannesburg Manufacturing Company.

The Committee also mentioned speaking with Duane Bale and Mary Fox.

Website

E. Miscellaneous

The Committee would like a website created to place information on the property as it is obtained. Burt will add a section to the County website.

The Committee discussed creating a model of how the Johannesburg area looked like during the days of the Johannesburg Manufacturing Company.

The Committee discussed having a small group of up to 15 chaperoned students tour the property and to provide their ideas on what uses they would like to see at the property. They could also prepare a presentation for Mr. Groen. Students could potentially help do things like trail clean up, help create the model of the area, and other community service projects.

Nowak mentioned agricultural ideas for the property including having horse demonstrations using historic equipment; planting native wild flowers in the farmed area and handing out a packet of native plant seeds to each student/child visitor; and hayrides. The Library is also interested in locating books Nature Center relating to classes given there as well as the history. Children could check out books there and return them to any library in the County.

Osburn asked Burt to speak with Mr. Smith and Mr. Groen to verify whether it would be alright to replace invasive plant species in the front pastures with native plants. She wanted to make sure the language against agriculture outside of the currently farmed area wouldn't prevent this. The invasive species could not be removed without then replacing with another type of plant. Kennedy added that he thought students could help identify invasive species and then help replace the plants.

F. Next Meeting

Monday, January 18 at 10:00 am.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Harkness adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.