

**Huron Joint Recreation District
Regular Board Meeting – Minutes
Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2020 at 6:30pm
Huron Boat Basin Marina Building, Huron, OH**

Members Present: Bryan Edwards, Rene’ Franklin, Gordon Hahn, Jennifer Kilbury, Jodi Mast, Jonathan Merckens, Tom Solberg

Present from HPRD: Doug Steinwart, Brian Croucher, Rick Reinbolt, Dan Weaver

Members Absent: Christine Crawford, Julie Spitzley

Community members in attendance: None

- 1. ROLE CALL OF MEMBERS:** See “Members Present” above.
- 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Motion by Ms. Franklin to approve May 5, 2020 written minutes; seconded by Ms. Mast. Minutes approved.
- 3. AUDIENCE COMMENTS:** None
- 4. NEW BUSINESS**

a. COVID-19 Programs, Events, Facilities, and Financial Impact

Update by Mr. Steinwart: Input from Erie County Health Department was very helpful as we considered individual program modifications/re-scheduling/cancellations. Some were clear-cut based on school closings. We held off on community events, re-considering on a month-by-month basis; sometimes on a weekly basis. All large gatherings obviously could not be held.

With modifications, we were able to have baseball/softball at Fabens, and our Beach Yoga program. We were also able to proceed with our Dawg Daze which was successful. We partnered with the Chamber of Commerce for the Farmers Market, which is ongoing though mid-October. We are now in our Fall Baseball and Softball program at Fabens. Upcoming events, like the Winter Fest, are still under consideration.

The positive news: Our facilities have been used more than we have ever seen. Fabens, Lake Shore Electric Trail, the Pier, Lake Front Park. The Boat Basin green space, have all been super-busy. We are thrilled to play a vital role in physical and mental health of residents and visitors.

Financial impact: Our goal is to not go backwards. For programs, we hope to end at 50% of our normal operating revenue. On the flip side, we have adjusted our part-time staff and our expenses. On the Boat Basin side, half of revenue is from seasonal dockage, half from transient. Seasonal was up, but transient is down due to group/club cancellations. We hope to end at 45% of revenue. We have reduced expenses and our Boat Basin staff. Through all of this, our staff has “worn different hats” pitching in through various roles.

The positive, financially, has been Nickel Plate Beach. Nickel Plate has been non-stop since opening. As planned for this year, we instituted a safety warning system for hazardous swimming conditions, and also a part-time police officer on weekends. We had budgeted \$35,000 in revenue from parking fees at Nickel Plate; we are now at \$78,500. We are pleased to have drawn so many visitors to the beach, and our community. The revenue will help offset some of our shortfalls in other areas. An unexpected outcome of the high usage is that park patrons moved farther east on the beach, causing concerns with the adjacent Cottage residents to the east. Mr. Steinwart distributed copies of the City’s survey map from Nickel Plate. The City does not own the property; but has a long-term lease with Norfolk & Western, that extends to the east to Old Homestead. Our Department has managed Nickel Plate since 1998, and we have always used the “creek/ditch” to delineate what we maintain. We had a positive meeting with the Cottage representatives to discuss

their concerns. These are generational cottages, and the residents have maintained that portion of the beach for decades. For now, we are walking that portion of the beach to do trash. The representatives are going back to their boards/co-owners with the survey information. It will ultimately be a Council decision. Mr. Steinwart also answered a question about the “swim buoys.”

b. Fabens Park Outside Tournaments - 2021

Brian Croucher stated that we are a six-month operation at Fabens. Beginning in May, we are working on the fields into October because they are so heavily used. In a normal year, the Huron Baseball/Softball program uses the Park from May to July, Monday through Friday. In conjunction, we rent fields 8-9 to individual teams. So, we have every field used Monday-Friday through July. Then we roll into our Dawg Daze Tournament the first weekend in August. We take a week off, then begin our Fall Ball program mid-August which runs into mid-October.

In addition, we have outside weekend tournament rentals. Last year we had five tournament rentals, this year we had eight on the books, but three cancelled due to COVID regulations—and we have had additional inquiries for 2021. He distributed a handout showing the 2021 dates. Our internal discussions have been that we want to set aside some time for community use—in addition to the fields, Fabens has tennis courts, walking trails, the playground, and the new shelter that we want our community to enjoy. The handout shows that we would like to “block off” the three holiday weekends and one August weekend for community use. We also believe we need to limit the number of weekends an individual can rent. While we see the positive economic impact of tournaments for our community, we also want to balance the use of the facility going forward. Mr. Steinwart asked the Board for any future comments as they consider this schedule.

5. CHAIRMAN COMMENTS: Mr. Solberg welcomed Bryan and Jonathan to the Board. Mr. Steinwart mentioned that we installed new safety ladders and throw rings on the pier. Doug Green, City Engineer, secured a grant for the safety ladders. We have also started to maintain the beach area in the cove west of the pier. Mr. Reinbolt thanked the Police Department for their help installing new “No Wake” sign on the lighthouse. All Board members welcomed the new members and thanked the Parks staff for their work. Ms. Franklin suggested additional litter cans in the pier area. Mr. Steinwart thanked our elected officials on the Board; appreciate that they have had to make many tough decisions during this time—and thanked Interim City Manager, Mike Spafford, who has made himself available to our Department whenever we asked. Mr. Steinwart stated that the October Board meeting is planned to be held at the City Council Chambers at Huron Municipal Building—unless there is a conflict.

6. ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn by Ms. Mast, seconded by Ms. Kilbury.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Irvin, Administrative Coordinator
Huron Parks & Recreation