

Please note the next meeting is June 14, 6pm at the Ridgeway Train Depot.

Minutes - FRIENDS of MILITARY RIDGE TRAIL

Meeting Date: May 10, 2021

Meeting Location: Zoom Meeting

Friends attending: Jerry Wilson, President; Dave Pearson, Vice-President; Bill Kalscheur, Treasurer; Sarah Castello, Secretary; Kevin Swenson, DNR; Brad Bates, DNR; Lydia Haynes; Jess Bernstein; Mary Kay Baum; George Swamp; Karl Heil

Minutes

Bill motioned and Dave seconded to accept the April 2021 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Reports

The financial report showed an end of April 2021 balance of \$29,912 in the Farmers Savings Bank account. There has been lots of bike trail money coming. Millers is the largest seller of trail passes. Dave motioned and Sarah seconded that we accept the financial report as presented, the motion passed unanimously.

Additions to this meeting agenda

None

Karl Heil representing the Friends of Blue Mounds State Park is asking for funding for Solar Panels on the Blue Mounds State Park Maintenance Building

- Currently there are two solar installations at the Blue Mounds State Park, on the Friends Shelter and on the Park Office.
- The panels were installed by Eagle Point Solar and the Friends of Blue Mounds State Park (FBMSP) paid for them entirely, using money generated from the Horribly Hilly Race and a run event..
- The FBMSP are now discussing putting solar panels on the maintenance building and have a bid from Eagle Point Solar of \$16,561 after rebates. They are asking FMRT to support 50% of the costs.
- The panels would benefit the FMRT by allowing the park to spend money that would otherwise be spent on electricity on other things that improve or maintain the park.
- There were questions about the cost/savings related to the panels.
- FBMSP have asked the governor for money for the project and for an electric vehicle (EV) charging station.
- There were questions about other possible funding sources for non-profits (one being the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant) and Jess volunteered to look into other funding sources. Brad looked up their contact for the Knowles-Nelson grants and will email the contact's email address to Karl and Jerry.
- Jerry asked if FBMSP had been in discussions with the State Friends Group.
- There was also a discussion about installing an EV charging station in the Blue Mounds Parking lot or parking lots along the Military Ridge Trail. Karl explained that EV stations have to be attached to a building that is receiving electric power.
- The FBMSP feel that support of the solar panels is leading by example to help mitigate climate change.
- Kevin and Brad think that the Nelson Stewardship Fund is on for next year depending on the state budget.
- We will discuss this request and get back to Karl.

DNR Topics

- Duluth contracted with Kittleson and Finks to redo the section of the trail in MH. It is almost completed.
- DNR wants Brix's Cldery to take out what they have put on the land adjacent to the building on the trail side. This is not their property.
- The trail was graded this month. The DNR will redo a section around Riley.
- DNR staff planted 30 trees along the trail: near North Road they planted white Pines, spruce in MH, 8 (maple mix) near Klevenville
- The Wells bench memorial has arrived. It will be placed across from the Howard Himsel kiosk and needs to be stained and installed. It may replace the picnic table.
- Brad is looking into purchasing a new mower. The DNR sold some old equipment through the WI on-line auction and have enough funds to purchase the new mower with the funds raised from the sale.

- The DNR may need help purchasing a wheel rake to groom the trail (it is used in front of the grader).
- Kevin needs information from Jerry for the audit.
- Karl asked if they could fill in an area of the trail by Grand View Farms. There is a farm crossing that is very rough. DNR will put it on the list.

Letter to towns along the trail

-Jerry has drafted some points for the letter to towns along the trail asking them for suggestions of people who may represent the towns at the FMRT meetings. He is going to run it by Kevin then send it to Sarah.

Depot Open House

Volunteers are needed for July 4th, and August and September open houses. Please check your calendar and contact Jerry.

New Bench

The family wanting a memorial bench has not gotten back to Bill.

Scholarships and endowments

- Questions include: How do you set one up? Do we designate a purpose for the endowment?
- Kevin says statewide friends group will help you set up endowments (they will come to a meeting and talk to us about our options).
- Lydia pointed out that we could use a certain percentage of the money made each year from the FMRT Fidelity Fund.
- Kevin is big advocate for endowments. They are a selling point for people to put money into an organization and are a big selling feature of the trail.

Kevin and Brads projects for this year are;

- DNR will be redecking some of the bridges into cement (this project is contingent of permits from the Corp of Engineers).
- They will be repairing asphalt off 92 in the Village of Mt Horeb near the High School.
- They will be dealing with the poorly resealed area that is a problem due to terrain near Ridgeway.

Mary Kay Baum - Black Walnut Trees

Ridgeway Nature and Garden Club wants to work with the DNR forester to mark black walnut trees that line the retention pond and the MRT. Mary Kay is wondering if the DNR would be interested in harvesting some of the walnut trees along the trail near the retention pond in conjunction with the Ridgeway Group, and possibly interested landowners along the trail, as a fund raising project.

Ownership of the Trail Committee

-The group suggested that members continue to take responsibility for updating, cleaning, and weeding around a kiosk that is assigned to them. Other suggestions of the group will be discussed at the next meeting.

ATC

- A suit was filed protesting approval of the towers crossing the Mississippi River.
- Kevin said they are still actively engaged with ATC about the proposed site of the line crossing of the trail.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be June 14, 2021, 6 pm, at the Depot.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Castello, Secretary