

**Kickapoo Reserve Management Board
Meeting Minutes for March 20, 2025**
Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center

Board members present: Travis Downing (Chair), AJ Mann, Dave Maxwell, Julie Hoel, Reggie Nelson, Scott Lind, Barb Sarnowski (via Zoom), Kjetil Garvin (via Zoom), Luke Zahm (via Zoom)

Board members absent: Bill Quackenbush, Joel Charles

Staff members present: Jason Leis, Jackie Yocum, Amy Dvorak, Amber Burch

Others in attendance: Lonnie Muller (Episcope), Jonel Kiesau, Marcia Bader (via Zoom), Erin Stiverson (Friends of KVR, via Zoom), Lisa H. (via Zoom), Guest (via Zoom)

Chair Downing called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Downing read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

Lind made a motion to approve the agenda. Nelson seconded the motion, and the motion carried with all ayes.

Leis confirmed the agenda was properly posted.

Public input: None.

Consent agenda:

The minutes from the February 20, 2025 meeting were provided. Hoel requested a change in the minutes. The minutes said "Hoel confirmed the executive committee received...", but it should read "Hoel asked". Hoel motioned to approve the minutes with the change. The motion was seconded by Maxwell, and the motion passed with all ayes.

Friends of KVR Update:

Erin Stiverson said the Friends met on Tuesday. She provided an update on the Creative Communities events: The Friends discussed moving about \$40,000 into three CDs.

The Friends reviewed funds donated for "buildings 2 and 3". Marcia Bader spoke with a lawyer who said they should reach out to everyone who donated money and give them the option to spend the money on a different Kickapoo Valley Forest School initiative or to receive a refund. Ashley Baker, the Friends president, is drafting a letter to send to the donors.

Earth Day event dates were finalized. The Friends-sponsored roadside cleanup and poetry contest will be held on April 26, 2025. The Friends are beginning to plan the annual garden tour.

Campsite D variance letter to DATCP for approval:

Hoel asked if we were changing the number of campers at the site. She asked if it used to be 40 people total if each of the four sites were at capacity. Leis said yes. Hoel asked if there could now potentially be 80 people if each of the eight proposed sites was at capacity. Leis said yes, but they would not fit. A discussion ensued.

Lind said the changes to Campsite D were already discussed and voted on at a previous meeting. This decision item is to approve the letter to be sent to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP).

The letter was provided on the screen. The current agreement indicates there are 26 rustic campsites on the Reserve. This number is incorrect, and it is believed Campsite D was originally counted as one campsite, but it should have been counted as four. With the change to eight sites at Campsite D, the total number of rustic campsites on the Reserve will be 33. Hoel asked for one change in the wording of the letter.

Lind made a motion to approve the letter. Maxwell seconded, and the motion passed with all ayes.

Biennial budget update:

Downing said a citizen was concerned that the board was not following protocol by not bringing the biennial budget to the full board. Leis reviewed the process he took for submitting the budget. He spoke with Representative Loren Oldenburg, who said this was a good year to ask for more in the biennial budget, and he said he would help guide Jason along if needed. Jason contacted the DOA fiscal employees to find out if we could ask for an additional position in the budget, and they said we would need approval to do it. Jason contacted HR about the position request since they would need to set up the new position. He said he was advised to get approval from the executive committee to request the new position, so that's what he did. The first time he spoke with the executive committee, it was Travis, Barb, and Luke in the meeting. Jason said he was given approval. He began the process of putting the additional position into the budget. Jason said he mentioned it at a board meeting and at a finance committee meeting. Jason said no laws were violated. He received the budget two days before it had to be submitted, so there was no time for the board to meet and review it. The budget was submitted on September 16, 2024. We recently found out the budget made it through the Governor's office and is going to the Joint Finance Committee.

The Kickapoo Reserve Management Board budget summary was shared. Leis explained the document. PR stands for program revenue and represents the 12100 and 12400 accounts. SEG stands for segregated and represents the 16100 and 16200 accounts. Overall, the budget proposal increased by 0.2 percent in 2025-2027. The Marketing Specialist position is a full-time position that is a combination of two LTE positions. Hoel asked about the overtime pay under the standard budget adjustments. Leis said he was told this is a placeholder that has been there for multiple years. Hoel asked what will happen if the budget request for a new full-time position isn't approved. Leis and Downing said things would continue as they have been with that person working two LTE positions.

Leis discussed the vehicle lease costs that were requested in the amount of \$19,200. He said the DOA financial group suggested we include this in the budget request as part of the new full-time position request.

Maxwell suggested the Reserve purchase a Ford Lightening as its next vehicle because it is an electric vehicle and would likely be useful for the Reserve. There was a discussion.

Property Manager/Police Officer position update:

A conditional offer has been given to a candidate, and it was accepted. The candidate is now going through the necessary background checks. Leis said once everything is official, he will let everyone know who has been hired. The hope is to have someone in the position by April 7, 2025.

Future use of the Prairie Springs buildings:

Leis said a lot of ideas have been generated within the five-year plan for how to use the Prairie Springs buildings, but nothing is final. In February, we found out that the Kickapoo Valley Forest School was moving to another location and wouldn't be using the buildings. Leis said we will use them for summer camp this year and our education program. Hoel asked if the buildings would be used every week during summer camp. Burch said yes. Hoel asked if we weren't using the classroom. Burch said it would depend on the needs and size of the group. She confirmed we have not made a schedule of which group will be in which classroom yet.

Leis said the buildings will be used for school groups after the summer and for other people who want to rent them. He mentioned the idea of an artist in residency program. Leis said another idea was after school programs to utilize the spaces at the Visitor Center area. The Nature Bound program will utilize the buildings as well. Leis said we are currently using the break room, exhibit area, and dark sky room for groups because we don't have the space for them. Leis said we've talked about making a lab in one of the Prairie Springs buildings to be used by primary and secondary schools and researchers. Downing said it sounds like we will have enough people and groups to utilize the buildings. Hoel said it did not sound like there were enough people to fill the buildings.

Hoel said if there are not a whole range of commitments to the buildings next year, it makes sense to offer them for the Forest School, which would continue a partnership that was intended when the buildings were built. Lind said when he first got involved in building the first building, his first question was whether the building was needed. He said he doesn't doubt we could create a program to fill those buildings. He mentioned a concern that the first building was financed through a combination of funds, but the second building's funds were for the Forest School, not the Reserve. Lind's opinion is to find a way to transfer the second building to the Forest School, if possible. Hoel said it makes sense to make Prairie Springs 2 readily available to the Forest School. Leis said Meaghan Gustafson wants to meet with him to discuss what the Forest School is thinking about regarding use of the Prairie Springs buildings. At this time, he does not know if it is one day a week, five days a week, or what. He said once he gets the request, he will bring it to the Board.

Hoel said she wants to get the feelings of the Board on what was the intention of the second Prairie Springs building. She said she agrees the intention of the second building was different than the first building. Hoel asked for the other Board members to give their thoughts. Downing said if the Forest School wants to use the building and they meet with Leis, the Board will review it at that time. Hoel asked Downing if he sees the intention of the second building as different than the first building. Downing said if the purpose of the second building was solely for the Forest School, it would be a good gesture to donate it to them, but he doesn't know if they even want it. Maxwell agreed the second building was intended to be used by the Forest School. Leis said he asked Meaghan if they were going to request to have the building, and she said no.

Leis said our education program should come first, and it has gone downhill due to lack of space, lack of programming, and losing instructors. He said having more space will give an opportunity to grow our program. Getting rid of the buildings will be difficult.

Burch said from the programming standpoint, we currently have four different Nature Bound groups, but we only have three regular spaces and one of those is the ciiporoke. On very cold days, the group in the ciiporoke had to move into the exhibit area. Burch said this program will benefit from the additional space. Hoel said the classroom in the Visitor Center divides into two rooms, which will be available after the Forest School leaves. Downing said he is sure a year from now, this will be worked out. If the Forest School is part of it, then great.

Hoel asked Nelson for his input. Nelson said he is taking it all in. He asked if the ad hoc committee for the buildings is still meeting. No, it is not. Nelson said he doesn't have the knowledge he needs in order to make a statement on which way we should go with this decision. Hoel asked Zahm, who was on Zoom, for his opinion. Zahm did not respond.

Education and Tourism Committee:

Burch said the last meeting was only to discuss the education management plan. The objectives from the previous meetings were reviewed as well as prioritization of the objectives.

The next Education and Tourism Committee meeting is scheduled for April 10, 2025, at 5:30 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Events/Tourism/Stewardship Update:

Yocum reviewed the Creative Communities Canvas Project. The canvases are out for display in the Visitor Center. The auction is live and ends on Sunday at 5:00 PM. This year, 254 canvases were returned compared to 266 last year. The theme was resilient.

We added the Ephemeral Art Series as part of the Creative Communities Project. It is each Monday in March and is for adults. The cost is \$35 per person. It seems like people are very excited about it.

The Student Art Experience, which is also part of the Creative Communities Project, occurred last week. Local high school art students come here for the day. There are seven professional artists, and the students get to experience different mediums. There were 65 students this year.

Hoel asked if Tomah High School students participated. Yocum said they create canvases, but they don't participate in the Student Art Experience. Creative Communities supports itself.

We are celebrating Earth Week April 19 through April 26, 2025. On April 19, 2025, there will be a Driftless Dialogue on leave no trace at 10:00 AM. Kristy Brown, who is a master instructor level II of leave no trace, will be the speaker. We are encouraging a lot of volunteering throughout the week. There will be garlic mustard gathering and annual roadside cleanup. There will be a large dumpster in the parking lot where people can dispose of their trash. The dumpster is donated by the Vernon County Solid Waste & Recycling Department. Earth Day is on April 22, 2025. Organic Valley and school groups will come out to volunteer. On April 26, 2025, the Friends of KVR will have their Earth Day Poetry Contest, which will happen at the Visitor Center. There will be naturalist hikes, more stewardship information, if it is clear enough there will be stargazing, and the roadside cleanup. The Friends adopted State Road 131 from the Visitor Center to just north of County Road P. The sign up for volunteering will go up on the website early next week.

Finance Committee:

No updates as there was no meeting last month.

The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for April 7, 2025, at 9:00 AM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Land Management Committee:

Downing said the land management plan was finished at the last meeting. It will go to the Board once it is completed. At the next meeting, they will start on the cultural resources plan. Bill Quackenbush has made some changes to it already.

The next Land Management Committee meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2025, at 5:30 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Other issues:

Lind discussed the dark sky lighting at the Visitor Center. All light fixtures on the sides of the Visitor Center, parking lot, and maintenance building will be replaced. There is an article in the newsletter that came out today. Dark Sky Week is April 21 to April 28, 2025. The Kickapoo Dark Sky Initiative's website will launch that week.

Hoel asked what happened to the land acknowledgment statement that used to hang on the wall in the meeting room. Yocum said the word Hoocak was fixed, and the sign needs to be rehung.

Maxwell clarified the date of the next Education and Tourism Meeting. The newsletter said April 13, 2025, which is a Sunday. The meeting was confirmed to be on April 10, 2025.

April 2025 is the last meeting for Hoel, Mann, and Maxwell as they are not seeking reappointment. Downing said after the meeting, we will have a little celebration. He thanked them for their service.

Adjournment:

Lind made a motion and Maxwell seconded to adjourn the meeting. It passed with all ayes.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 17, 2025, at 6:00 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Dvorak". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and date.

Minutes transcribed by Amy Dvorak, 3/27/2025