

**Kickapoo Reserve Management Board
Meeting Minutes for September 18, 2025**
Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center

Board members present: Travis Downing (Chair), Joel Charles, Scott Lind, Reggie Nelson, Bill Quackenbush (via Zoom), Kelly Rueckheim, Barb Sarnowski, Damian Thundercloud, Lyndsey Winchel, Luke Zahm

Board members absent: Kjetil Garvin

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

Others in attendance: Lonnie Muller (Episcope), Tim Hundt (Vernon Reporter), Emily Schendel, Jen Oium, Anne-Marie Fryer (via Zoom), Gordon Roesler, Katherin Roesler, Paige Huber, Rob Danielson, Dana Eakles, Mary Capehart, Terri Nelson, Jerry Thompson

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. The motion passed with all ayes.

Leis confirmed the agenda was properly posted.

Sarnowski motioned to approve the minutes from the August 2025 meeting, and Zahm seconded. The motion passed with all ayes.

Chairperson and/or Executive Director report:

Downing did not have a report.

Leis explained packets were provided to the board members that contain all information relating to the Prairie Springs 1 & 2 buildings.

Due to an issue at the Land Management Committee meeting on Tuesday, Zoom links will not be posted on the agendas anymore. The links will still be available when requested. Only those who request the link will be allowed to attend via Zoom.

Budget Report:

The Wisconsin Department of Administration Bureau of Financial Management will give a presentation at the Finance Committee Meeting on Monday, September 22, 2025 at 9:00 AM. All board members are invited and encouraged to attend. At the October 2025 board meeting, we will review the presentation.

Leis reviewed the Revenue and Expense Summary on the screen. The FY26 budget is not loaded into the spreadsheet yet. The spreadsheet only shows the expenses and revenue.

Friends of KVR Update:

No update.

Public appearances:

Emily Schendel, President of the Kickapoo Valley Forest School (KVFS) Governance Council, provided a summary of the KVFS Governance Council's involvement in the board discussions about the Prairie Springs 1 & 2 buildings. Schendel said the KVFS Governance Council does not support allocating funds to purchase the buildings from the Reserve. If the Reserve cannot give the buildings to the KVFS, the Governance Council requests the Reserve revisit a discussion they started in January 2025 to use the Prairie Springs buildings at their current location.

Discussion of what to do with Prairie Springs 1 & 2 education buildings:

Rueckheim asked what was the intent of the ad hoc committee that was discussed at the last meeting. Downing explained it was to write a letter to the State of Wisconsin requesting to transfer the buildings to the KVFS. Winchel added it was to open the discussion up to the public.

Charles said he will be resigning his position on the board due to how the Prairie Springs buildings issue has been handled. He reviewed the process as he saw it.

Thundercloud said this issue has been going on for a few years now, and there has been plenty of community engagement. He believes there is a compromise to be made such as giving one building to the KVFS and keeping one on the Reserve.

Winchel suggested reaching out to the University of Wisconsin to get an impartial third party to create three options of what to do with the buildings for the board members and community to vote on. Thundercloud said four options would be keeping both buildings, giving one away and keeping the other, giving both buildings away, or selling both buildings. Winchel said the facilitator would also come up with what to do with the buildings should they stay on the Reserve.

Thundercloud suggested bringing the issue to the Ho-Chunk Nation Legislature to review the facts and provide their opinion. This could be used when approaching the State of Wisconsin about what to do with the buildings.

Charles said the ad hoc committee was going to be formed to ask the State Building Commission (SBC) if the board can transfer the buildings. He does not believe this would trigger the SBC to sell the buildings. He would like the board to have a mediator assist with drafting a letter to the SBC asking what the board can do with the buildings.

Lind discussed what kinds of questions need to be asked to the SBC. Leis said the questions were asked and answered by the SBC in May 2025. Sarnowski asked if the SBC had the background information regarding the buildings.

Zahm said he is feeling pressure from elected officials on this issue. Zahm said the board could gather as much information as they wanted, but it wouldn't bring them any closer to making a

decision on this issue. He said there will always be people who won't be satisfied with whatever decision is made.

Rueckheim said the board should get a mediator to assist with the decision-making process.

Charles said he doesn't see the downside to asking the SBC additional questions. Lind said he didn't realize until tonight that the questions asked in May 2025 were responses from the SBC. He does not see the SBC's position changing based on another letter to them.

Thundercloud asked what the role of the Ho-Chunk Nation is in this discussion and decision. He hasn't heard anyone ask what the Nation thinks of this issue. Charles asked if the Ho-Chunk Nation still holds the position that the Visitor Center site was only supposed to have one building. Thundercloud said he couldn't comment on that because it is a new legislature, which is why he feels it could be beneficial to get an opinion from the Ho-Chunk Nation Legislature and/or President.

Quackenbush said the board is comprised of the decision makers. He said if the board continues going back to the State asking the same questions in different ways, they will grow tired of the board. Quackenbush said the buildings belong to the State of Wisconsin.

There was discussion about giving the Ho-Chunk Nation time to review the facts and determine their position on what should happen with the two buildings. Charles asked what questions we are asking the Nation. Lind said he likes the idea of an open-ended question.

Zahm made a motion to have the Ho-Chunk Nation evaluate the options and the information to formulate an opinion to bring back to the board to be discussed and shared. The Nation has as much time as needed to complete this. Charles seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously with all ayes.

Education and Tourism Committee:

There was no committee meeting since the July 2025 board meeting.

The next Education and Tourism Committee meeting is scheduled for October 9, 2025, at 5:30 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Finance Committee:

There was no committee meeting since the July 2025 board meeting.

The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2025, at 9:00 AM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Land Management Committee:

Downing said the committee reviewed the draft management plan at the last meeting.

The school zone signs around the Visitor Center no longer apply since the KVFS is no longer on the property. Downing said the committee recommends changing them to a no hunting zone. The state statute on the sign is no longer applicable. A discussion ensued.

Lind made a motion to change the signs to “No Hunting Zone”, and Charles seconded. The motion passed with all ayes.

Dairyland Power is proposing to upgrade the transmission lines to 765 kV lines. One possible route crosses the Old Highway 131 Trail. A map was shown on the screen. The Town of Stark passed a resolution request last night.

The committee recommended a rock climbing policy. The draft policy was shared on the screen. The board discussed the policy. Downing said this would be on next month’s agenda. Lind said he would not be at next month’s meeting. He wanted his opinion noted that he does not think padding should be allowed.

The committee recommended increasing the fee for hike-in campsites from \$10 to \$15 and for vehicle accessible campsites from \$15 to \$20. Fees will be voted on at the December 2025 board meeting.

The next Land Management Committee meeting is scheduled for October 14, 2025, at 5:30 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Board Member Matters:

Lind said he is contacted every day for dark sky fixtures and lighting. He said there is a very real possibility that if the trend continued, we could look at establishing a dark sky park at the Reserve in two or three years.

Request for future agenda topics:

None.

Adjournment:

Lind made a motion and Zahm seconded to adjourn the meeting. It passed with all ayes. The meeting adjourned at 7:32 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 16, 2025, at 6:00 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Minutes transcribed by Amy Dvorak, Executive Assistant