

Committee OKs veterans parking, waiting area

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Veterans accessing the Taylor County Courthouse will get more of a welcome with the designation of two spots near the front entrance as “Veterans Only” parking.

Nikki Sherman, a benefits specialist with the county veterans service office, brought the idea to Tuesday’s meeting of the buildings and grounds committee. She said she had seen similar signs at a local business designating parking spots for veterans or active duty military. She said she spoke with the manager at the store about the possibility of doing the same thing at the courthouse and that he gave her two extra poles they were not using.

She said that many of the veterans accessing the office were older and that it would be nice for them to not have to walk as far.

“It is a good idea,” said committee member Jim Gebauer, noting that with the poles donated it would not cost much to do.

County board chairman Jim Metz suggested spots by the main entrance noting that employees are not supposed to be parking in those spaces as it is, so they should be open.

Committee member Diane Albrecht said that freestanding signs they would be potentially movable if a spot worked better than another. Committee members voted to go ahead with the designated parking stalls. The county will work with getting a sign ordered to put on the post.

In related business, committee members voted to have the office directly across the hall from the Veterans Service Office be designated to be used by the Veterans Service Office as a waiting room area. The office space includes a front area as well as a back office area that is much larger than the current one being used for the veterans service officer.

Buildings and grounds director Joe Svejda suggested that they may want to swap the two offices since the one on the east side of the building is larger. “The office that Shelly [Shaw] has is almost a closet,” he said.

However, committee members said they wanted to leave how the space was utilized up to the veterans service committee and the office staff. The goal is to prevent having veterans from having to sit in the courthouse hallway to wait for an appointment with the veterans service office.

Horse arena

Taylor County will split the estimated \$1,500 cost of installing drain tile in the horse arena at the fairgrounds with the 4-H Horse Project group with the county committing to adding more sand to the arena when completed.

Resident John Zuleger had approached the county about putting drain tile in the arena as a way to resolve persistent problems with water collecting in some places and not draining away. This makes it difficult to keep the surface maintained and even for the riders and groups using it.

Fair Board president Tim Hobl raised concerns that \$15,000 was spent a few years ago to improve the facility and expressed concern that if the surface was disturbed to install the drain tile they could end up with rocks working their way up into the sand top layer. “Who will screen it and take care of putting it back,” Hobl asked. He noted the fair spends about \$500 a year on maintenance of the arena.

The committee had initially tabled action because Zuleger was not at the meeting. When he arrived later in the meeting, committee members revisited the issue. He suggested installing four sets of drain tile utilizing slitted plastic tubing with a permeable fabric sleeve over it to keep it from being clogged with sand. The goal he said would be to direct water to the northeast corner by the gate entrance and into the existing ditches.

Zuleger said it is an underused resource in the community and said usage could be increased by making sure it was better maintained. He said the work could be done with a mini excavator and take a relatively short period of time to get done.

Metz said they will need to coordinate with the highway department which will be doing additional work in that area of the fairgrounds to address ongoing water drainage concerns.

In the end, committee members approved moving ahead with allowing the project splitting the cost with the 4-H Horse Project group at a total cost not to exceed \$1,500.

ARPA funds

Committee members are looking to tap into the county’s American Recovery Plan Act funds to pay to replace boat landings at Miller Dam and to replace a parking lot at the Taylor County Education Center.

According to Svejda, the county had been told by engineers that it would cost about \$204,000 to replace the boat landing at Miller Dam on the Chequamegon Flowage. With other projects needing funding elsewhere in the county, Svejda had balked at spending that much for the boat landing, although he noted it is needed.

“That is a lot of money,” said committee member Lorie Floyd. “How much money does Miller Dam bring in for us each year?” she asked.

County finance director Larry Brandl noted the 3,000 acre flowage is a significant attraction for the county and while the county collects between \$5,000 and \$6,000 in boat launch fees each year, the impact for area businesses is significant.

Svejda said there is the potential that a state grant could cover about half the cost of the ramp replacement, however he said he would have to look into it further. Committee member Rod Adams noted that the county may not be able to use ARPA funds from the federal government as a match for a state grant.

In that case, it was suggested they could request assistance funding from the county’s power line impact fee fund since it was an outdoor recreation project.

According to Brandl, the county has about \$532,000 in ARPA funds that are uncommitted at this time. It takes finance and personnel committee approval and approval by the full county board to spend those funds.

Floyd expressed concern at spending one-time ARPA funds for a \$100,000 parking lot noting that should be something that is a routine maintenance for the county.

Brandl estimated it would take between four and five years to save up the funds for the parking lot work and limp along with bandaid fixes.

In the end, committee members approved moving forward with the projects and seeking a combination of ARPA and power line funds for the projects.

In other business, committee members:

★ Approved allowing a community member to install a hitching post near

the northeast corner of the Miller Dam Recreation Area parking lot. The location is near the dumpsters. Svejda said he was approached by a resident noting the area is used by many Amish families who currently use the nearby trees to tie off their horses. In addition to a hitching post, there will be a barrel and shovel placed there for removal of animal waste.

★ Approved spending up to \$40,000 to install a concrete vault toilet at Wellington Lake park to replace a decaying wooden outhouse currently in place. Svejda said they are seeing more use of the park as a recreation and swimming lake rather than for fishing. He said the vault toilets are used elsewhere in the county and he said they are virtually indestructible with the only real maintenance being the steel doors which rust over time. Brandl noted there are some in the county that were placed in the 1980s and which are still in good shape. Svejda proposed a structure with two unisex stalls to meet the needs of the recreation area. The committee will also seek power line funds to help cover this cost.

★ Approved allowing the company that operates the Head Start child care facility at the Taylor County Education Center to install security cameras in the playground area. The work will be done at no cost to the county and the county will have access to the security footage in the event there is a situation there.

Concessionaire chosen to run Mondeaux Dam Lodge

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest has selected The Mondeaux Dam Lodge, LLC as the new concessionaire to operate the Mondeaux Dam Lodge and Recreation Rental Services under a Special Use Permit with the Forest Service.

The Mondeaux Dam Lodge facility and restaurant are undergoing final updates and preparations before officially opening.

“We are very excited that the final stages for re-opening the Mondeaux Dam Lodge are in progress,” says, Mark Beuning, Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest technical services staff officer. “Making this historic building available to the public has been long awaited and the partnership with Gary (No) Marschke, owner of The Mondeaux Dam Lodge LLC makes it possible to serve the public again.”

While the Lodge restaurant is not yet open for business, the coin-operated

showers are available for near-by campers and the public is invited to enjoy the beach and use the grills in the picnic area. The glacial spring in the Mondeaux Dam Recreation Area, updated with a new water outlet, open-sided shelter, and accessible ramp, is also available to the public. The upper parking lot is currently closed but the lower lot is available. Because of ongoing work, visitors are asked to use caution while in the area.

The Mondeaux Dam Lodge facility has been closed since 2017 for a multi-year renovation of the historic site. The Lodge, a Civilian Conservation Corps era single-story wood frame structure is on the National Register of Historic Places. Contracted renovations on the Lodge have been managed by Tribally owned construction company LDF Construction, LLC with additional work provided by local contractors.