

**CALHOUN COUNTY**  
**PROCEEDINGS OF THE**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**SPECIAL SESSION**

March 17, 2011

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The Special Session of the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners convened at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, March 17, 2011 in the Commissioners' Meeting Room, County Building, Marshall, Michigan.

Chairman Kale called the meeting to order and requested the Deputy Clerk call the roll.

Present: Comrs. Todd, Haadsma, Frisbie, Camp, VanSickle and Kale

Excused: Comr. Behnke

Staff Present: Administrator/Controller Kelli Scott, Assistant County Administrator Brad Wilcox, Corporation Counsel Richard Lindsey, and Administrative Assistant Katie Kelly

2. INTRODUCTION OF SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION

Comr. Kale explained the purpose of the meeting was to ask questions, gather information and hear comments on the proposed paving of a trailway through the Ott Preserve. He explained that all three sides would be presented then public comment would begin, with each member of the public being allowed 2 minutes to speak. He stated the goal was for the Board to make a decision on this issue at the April 7 Board of Commissioners meeting. He stated they had three choices, they could vote no and reject the agreement to partner with the Trailway Alliance and Calhoun County Road Commission and go ahead with paving the trailway, they could vote yes and go ahead with the agreement or they could vote on a modified agreement which would be something between the two. He asked that citizens try not to repeat statements and be respectful of each other with no negative comments.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

"Moved Comr. Haadsma, supported by Comr. Camp to approve the March 17, 2011 Calhoun County Board of Commissioners Special Session Agenda as presented."

On a voice vote, Motion CARRIED

#### 4. PRESENTATION BY THE CALHOUN COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION

Kevin Henning, Managing Director of the Calhoun County Road Commission, explained the Road Commission manages the parks in Calhoun County. He stated that the Road Commission used to employ a Parks Supervisor but when that position was dissolved in 2008, a trailway group was started and then it became the Trailway Alliance led by volunteer leadership. Angie Kline, engineer for the Calhoun County Road Commission, stated the route through the Ott was tentatively approved by the MDEQ as the route with the least impact on the wetlands. She stated the route that is now being considered for the trailway is through the Consumers Energy right of way but they don't know if that will be approved because of the wetlands. She stated the trail should be 10' wide with a 2' clearance on each side and at this point they don't know what type of materials will be used for the paths. She also stated there is no money set aside for the maintenance of the trailway. Holly Vickers of the DEQ stated she has not received a formal application so the DEQ cannot take a position yet but she is willing to review anything that is presented. She indicated that the Wetlands Protection Act states an applicant has to show that a project is wetland dependent, which means that the project has to be in the wetlands to serve its purpose, and if it isn't, applicant must show that there will be minimal impact on the wetlands.

#### 5. PRESENTATION BY THE CALHOUN COUNTY TRAILWAYS ALLIANCE

Tom Garnett, President of the Calhoun County Trailway Alliance, explained the role of the Trailway Alliance as a non-profit. He explained that if the Board of Commissioners does not approve acceptance of the grant of \$500,000 in State funds, it would end the project because MDOT requires a match for its funding and the \$500,000 serves as the local match. He stated they have hired a fund development firm to interview people in leadership roles in the County and the firm has led him to believe they were supportive. He reviewed maps of the three proposed trails. He stated that the major concern is to provide a trail that is safe and provides a fruitful experience with nature. He assured people that no one on the Trailway Alliance wanted to harm the Preserve, they felt it would be more protected because more people would be utilizing it and could keep an eye on things. Mr. Garnett also read a letter of support from a wildlife biologist. He stated there are at least 20 multi-use trails in parks around the country that are similar to what they are proposing and provided their information.

#### 6. PRESENTATION BY THE FRIENDS OF THE OTT PRESERVE

Bill Comai, former President of the Friends of the Ott, provided a list of reasons why they opposed the trailway, such as the Preserve's intent was for people to enjoy nature, not to bring in concrete and limestone and disturb the balance, there was no maintenance plan for the future and there had been no approval by the DNR or DEQ. He offered alternative routes for the trail. Doug Sophia, current President of the Friends of the Ott, stated that in 2005 the Friends of the Ott sent a letter to the Calhoun County Road Commission that stated they were supportive of the concept of the trailway system. He stated that is still true. He claimed the letter also stated that the trail is unique and maintaining the integrity of the property was their priority. He stated the Preserve is public land and that the Commissioners were the stewards of that land and they had been entrusted to protect it for our children and our children's children.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Comr. Kale restated the rules of public comment and thanked everyone for attending and speaking their opinions. He also invited everyone to the Board of Commissioners meeting afterward.

Members of the public presented their comments, with ten people showing support for the Trailway Alliance's proposal of widening and paving the trails through the Ott Preserve and ten people opposed.

Those who did not have time to speak were asked to stay for the Regular Board of Commissioners meeting and present their comments at that time.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m. at the call of the Chair.

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Chairman  
Calhoun County Board of Commissioners

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Clerk  
Calhoun County Board of Commissioners