

CASS COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REGULAR BOARD MEETING

**1st Floor Conference Room
Cass County Administrative Building
120 North Broadway St.
Cassopolis, MI 49031**

July 2, 2026

4:00 P.M. - CALL MEETING TO ORDER - President VanBelle

INVOCATION

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - Commissioner Kucklick

ROLL CALL – Secretary Dohm

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

PUBLIC COMMENT

COMMITTEE REPORTS

DIRECTOR'S REPORT - Director Wyman

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Dark Sky/WiFi Update**
- LWCF Update**
- July Parks and Recreation Month Resolution**

NEW BUSINESS

- Patty's Updates**
- Russ Donation**
- West Harmon Boat Launch**
- Sears Park Boat Launch**
- Dodd Park Tree**
- August meeting location**

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Next regular meeting August 6, 2026. Please call 445-4456 if you cannot attend.

CASS COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
1st Floor Conference Room
120 N Broadway
Cassopolis, MI 49031

June 4, 2026

4:07 p.m. – CALL MEETING TO ORDER –President VanBelle

INVOCATION – Commissioner Parrish

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Commissioner Stewart

ROLL CALL –

Director Wyman – P

Sam Barrera – P

Annie File –A

Tharan Suvarna - P

Jamie Stafne –P

Jayne Bailey – P

Fritz Kucklick -A

Jeff VanBelle - P

Joyce Sheteron-Locke - P

Robert Parrish –P

Tami Stewart - P

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to accept: Commissioner Parrish

Second: Commissioner Barrera

Approved

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to accept: Commissioner Parrish

Second: Commissioner Barerra

Approved

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS –

Janice Hadley & Loren Hodges

COMMENTS: Strongly urged everyone to be vigilant and proactive regarding the repurposing of land use for non-agricultural purposes.

COMMITTEE REPORTS – None

DIRECTOR’S REPORT – Director Wyman

1. Was Presented
 - a. Swim areas are open.
 - b. Didn’t contract out mowing as much as previously due to budget cuts, however that means more time is spent by employees mowing the parks.
 - c. Had a positive budget meeting a few days ago.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Dark Sky

- a. Michiana Star event is set for next week, Thursday through Saturday night, more or less just a gathering of like-minded people interested in the stars.
- b. Continuing to look for speakers for the star party in August.
- c. Spoke at the Edwardsburg Library – solar scope.
- d. Will be speaking at Camp Friedenswald.

2. LWCF Update

- a. Things are moving. We did get recommended for the removal of the splash pad and extend the completion date until June 2027 with no penalty. Just waiting on the signatures from DNR.

3. Wi-Fi

- a. Scheduled to be installed Tuesday, June 9th.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Resolution in Support of Parks and Recreation Month

- a. Resolution read by President VanBelle.

MOTION by Commissioner Barerra: To accept the resolution designating July as Park and Recreation Month

SECOND: Commissioner Parrish

**CASS COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
DESIGNATION OF JULY AS PARK AND RECREATION MONTH**

WHEREAS, parks and recreation is an integral part of communities throughout this country, including Cass County; and

WHEREAS, parks and recreation promotes health and wellness, improving the physical and mental health of people who live near parks; and

WHEREAS, parks and recreation promotes time spent in nature, which positively impacts mental health by increasing cognitive performance and well-being, and alleviating illnesses such as depression, attention deficit disorders, and Alzheimers; and

WHEREAS, parks and recreation encourages physical activities by providing space for popular sports, hiking trails, swimming pools and many other activities designed to promote active lifestyles; and

WHEREAS, park and recreation programming and education activities, such as out-of-school time programming, youth sports and environmental education, are critical to childhood development; and

WHEREAS, parks and recreation increases a community's economic prosperity through increased property values, expansion of the local tax base, increased tourism, the attraction and retention of businesses, and crime reduction; and

WHEREAS, parks and recreation is fundamental to the environmental well-being of our community; and

WHEREAS, parks and recreation is essential and adaptable infrastructure that makes our communities resilient in the face of natural disasters and climate change; and

WHEREAS, our parks and natural recreation areas ensure the ecological beauty of our community and provide a place for children and adults to connect with nature and recreate outdoors; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. House of Representatives has designated July as Parks and Recreation Month; and

WHEREAS, the County of Cass recognizes the benefits derived from parks and recreation resources.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission that July is recognized as Park and Recreation Month in the County of Cass.

ADOPTED THIS 4TH DAY OF JUNE, 2026

ATTEST:

Patty Dohm/Recording Secretary
Cass County Parks & Recreation Commission
Commission

Jeff VanBelle, President
Cass County Parks & Recreation

2. Review Conservation Conversation Data

- a. Presented by Director Wyman, and asked board to review it.

3. Property Donation

- a. Mr. Nelson has approximately 40 acres on Monet Street that he would like to donate to the parks. Director Wyman visited it. Directed Mr. Nelson to consider the Land Conservancy or a local university as well.

4. July Meeting Location

- a. July 2nd – East Harmon Park

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner VanBelle – Commented regarding the 1500 acres of solar panels that will be going in Porter Township (Cass County) and Fabius Township (St. Joseph County).

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Commissioner Parrish

SECOND: Commissioner Suvarna

MEETING ADJOURNED

Respectfully submitted,
Patty Dohm
Recording Secretary

Next meeting will be July 2nd, 2026. Please let us know if you cannot attend.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

CASS COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION

July 2, 2026

Dr. Lawless:

- Hosted one scouting troop.
- Hosted Disc Golf volunteers
- Many hours of hiking and biking trail maintenance.
- Hosted one Dark Sky viewing night.
- Hosted one reservation.
- Mowed and trimmed.
- Installed WiFi within Lawless maintenance facility.
- Hosted The Friends of the Parks group.
- Did monthly water testing
- Mowed and trimmed.
- Hosted Cairn Stone Adventure Hiking Group.

Dodd:

- Did monthly water testing.
- Hosted two reservations.
- Mowed and trimmed.
- Hosted one cabin rental

Russ Forest:

- Mowed and trimmed.
- Hosted two reservations.

Stevens Memorial Park:

- Mowed and trimmed.
- Repaired buoys
- Hauled woodchips and cleaned beach

Sears Park:

- Trash removal.

Harmon Park East / West:

- Mowed and trimmed
- Repaired boat launch.

Veteran's Memorial Park:

- Removed woody debris.
- Trimmed.

With almost perfect conditions for growth, Jay and Jodi continue to spend much of their time mowing, trimming and cutting back trails within all our parks. They paid particular attention to the Lawless hiking and biking trails due to the fact more than 60 hikers came out from Ron Gunn's Adventure hiking club on June 27th. So many positive comments and compliments on how the park looked in general and how nice the trails were to hike on. We also hosted a handful of volunteers working on the biking trail and disc golf course during the weekend. In addition, they both are busy getting ready for the always busy Fourth of July weekend. As you can imagine any park located on the water will see heavy use. This month has seen an increase in shelter reservations with Jay and Jodi doing a wonderful job taking care of those.

With only being in the office for three days, Patty does an amazing job handling all the phone calls, reservations, annual pass requests and answering various questions just to name a few. It really is remarkable what she accomplishes during her limited time within the office. Along with those duties she is constantly scanning social media and the internet updating our information whenever possible. Not an easy task with so much incorrect/inconsistent information out there. She is also trying to streamline our on-line requests when folks use the QR code. We have found some gaps that need filling for the process to be more complete and effective.