

**CASS COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

**Point Park
56595 Point Rd.
Cassopolis, MI 49031**

September 3, 2026

3:45 P.M.- CALL MEETING TO ORDER - President VanBelle

INVOCATION

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - Commissioner File

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**
- **SMC Intern**
- **Hydro Project Funding**

NEW BUSINESS

- **Patty’s Updates**
- **Sears Boat Launch**
- **Point Park Overview**
- **October Meeting Location**

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Next regular meeting October 1, 2026. Please call 445-4456 if you cannot attend.

CASS COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Arthur Dodd Memorial Park
61437 Creek Rd
Niles, MI 49120
August 6, 2026

4:00 p.m. – CALL MEETING TO ORDER –President VanBelle

INVOCATION – Commissioner Barerra

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE –

ROLL CALL –

Director Wyman – P	Sam Barrera – P	Annie File –A	Tharan Suvarna - P
Jamie Stafne –P	Jayne Bailey – P	Fritz Kucklick -P	Jeff VanBelle - P
Joyce Sheteron-Locke - P	Robert Parrish –P	Tami Stewart - P	

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to accept: Commissioner Barrera

Second: Commissioner Parrish

Approved

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to accept: Commissioner Parrish

Second: Commissioner Barerra

Approved

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS: None

COMMENTS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS –

Commissioner Bailey Reported – We discussed trying for a millage. All of the millages except for one passed in this last vote. One of the obstacles last time, the county board was afraid to support a millage for fear of not being re-elected. We need to create a new rec plan by April 1 of next year, so it would be a good time to get public support behind the parks. The committee is charged with meeting some more to hone in on this possibility for the May vote.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT – Director Wyman

1. Was Presented
 - a. Appreciate Commissioner Parrish for all the time he has spent regarding the wi-fi at Lawless.
 - b. Met with a professor at SMC, Rich Reynolds, who is trying to create an internship (with Cass County Parks) in his curriculum that students will have to work so many hours or do something like Andrews University did with all the incoming freshmen being required to do community service – which they did at Dodd Park.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Dark Sky

- a. July 8 – telescope demonstration at Camp Friedenswald. All their outside lighting is dark sky compliant
- b. July 13 – interview with ABC 57 – data center and light pollution
- c. July 16 – interview by U of M student doing Master thesis on Michigan night sky and how it effects ecology
- d. July 21 – read his book at the library to the kids
- e. WNDU interview regarding upcoming star party
- f. Interview with channel 9 from Traverse City
- g. Internet at Lawless is progressing nicely
- h. Update on the Star Party plans

2. LWCF Update

- a. Reached out to our DNR representative. Almost assured us that we could proceed. Director Wyman is confident that at least the parking lot will be done this fall

3. Sears Boat Launch

- a. The boat lift is finally gone

NEW BUSINESS

1. Patty’s Updates

- a. Sandhill Crane signs

2. Cass County Conservation District

- a. Reached out to let us put literature at their booth at the Cass County Fair
 - b. Hydro may be funding some conservation projects within the parks. Suggestions include:
 - i. Equestrian walking bridge, stabilizing bank, eliminate material falling into creek
 - ii. Bank erosion at East Harmon Park
 - iii. Boat launch at Shavehead
 - iv. Bridge that is washing out at Lawless
 - v. Phragmites
 - vi. Board walk repair at Lawless
3. **Cass County Historical Commission Harvest Fest**
- a. October 10th. We will be doing hayrides and taking out some tables and chairs. Sandhill Crane is in the morning, this is in the afternoon
4. **California Dreamin'**
- a. Outdoor equipment content creator spent some time in Russ and Lawless creating content for his social media
5. **Dodd Park Overview**
- a. We have 6-8 trees that really need to be taken down. Tour of the park followed meeting
6. **September Meeting Location**
- a. .Point Park on Kelsey Lake on the dead-end on Point Road at 3:45
- .

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thank you to Tharan Suvarna for serving on the Parks Board. He has taken a new job in Bay City

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Commissioner Parrish

SECOND: Commissioner Sheteron-Locke

MEETING ADJOURNED

Respectfully submitted,
Patty Dohm
Recording Secretary

Next meeting will be September 3, at Point Park.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT CASS COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION

September 3, 2026

Dr. Lawless:

- Hosted 200 Cassopolis Middle School students.
- Hosted one night of Dark Sky viewing.
- Began receiving applications for hunting at Dr. Lawless Park.
- Hosted musical act prior to Dark Sky event.
- Met with representatives about Dr. Lawless plaque placement.

Dodd:

- Hosted four reservations.

Russ Forest:

- Hosted three reservations.
- Placed Memorial Bench

Stevens Memorial Park:

- Cleaned the beach.
- Mowed and cleaned up debris.
- Hosted Lake Association Picnic.
- Added woodchips to play area.

Sears Park:

- Empty trash barrel.
- Mowed and trimmed.
- Repaired parking area erosion.
- Enforced parking policy.

Harmon Park East / West:

- Enforced parking policy.
- Emptied trash barrel.
- Mowed and trimmed.

In addition to their normal duties, Jay and Jodi did a nice job getting Dr. Lawless Park ready for approximately 200 middle school students from Cassopolis Schools. Extra prep work included mowing, trimming and cutting back more than two miles of hiking trails. They also put forth an extraordinary effort at cleaning up the outer ring of the Russ West picnic area and cutting back the Russ Forest equestrian riding trails. With Jay taking some well-deserved time off, Jodi and I had the parks all to ourselves for a few days. Jodi spent some time at Dodd Park attending the fee booth and I prepped and cleaned up after various reservations.

Patty continues to work hard on this year's Harvest Festival. All indications are this is going to be another big event (800-1200 people typically) if the weather cooperates of course. She also met with county leadership concerning the way to properly introduce information on the internet to meet new federal guidelines. She is also working with our payment processing company (All-Paid) to update the payment process for collecting various fees. Hunting applications for Dr. Lawless Park are starting to come in as well.