

Friends of Lapham Peak

Annual Meeting

Nov 3, 2021



Attendees: (*Board Members Present)

*Louise Borzynski, *John Hillmer, *Jon Jeffords, *Rita Keber, *Colton Kelly (DNR), *Anne Korman (DNR), *Kris Maki, *John McCarthy, *Anne Riendl, *Karl Timm, Rick Von Haden, Dan Wiley, *Randy Wichinski, and Melissa Jarecki

Guests: Friends of Lapham Peak (approximately 17)

Speaker: Steve Schmelzer, Bureau Director, Parks and Recreation Management Program, Fish, Wildlife and Parks Division, Department of Natural Resources

Meeting was held using ZOOM: Meeting was called to order at 7:03pm.

Annual Reports: A full copy of all Annual Reports, including our Financial Statements has been published on our website at this location: laphampeakfriends.org/about/#annual_reports in PDF form ([click for a copy](#))

Agenda:

1. Steve Schmelzer, Bureau Director-DNR
 - Prepared Comments
 - Q&A
2. Anne Korman, Superintendent, Kettle Moraine State Forest
3. Colton Kelly, Lapham Peak Park Manager
4. Louise Borzynski
 - a. Business Meeting
 - b. John McCarthy, Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Resolution Request
 - c. Election of Board Members

(These are highlights as captured by the Friends' Secretary, and are not a transcript of the meeting***)***

Steve Schmelzer, DNR:

Steve began his presentation with his long history of working with the Parks and with Friends Groups, and his appreciation for the work that is accomplished with these partnerships. He mentioned a number of examples from his past and commented on his enthusiasm as we all work towards the goal of building the new Lodge at Lapham Peak.

He mentioned how during the first year of COVID, how record attendance was a challenge but how good it was that it brought people to the Parks, and that it also increased Park revenues. However, this was the first example he used where increased revenue, or what became a profit, did not translate into solving problems that the Parks are dealing with. The Parks (including he) do not have spending authority to access and use these profits or reserve funds!

Steve commented on other issues, include labor rates, which make it difficult to hire people at competitive wages. He mentioned the need for improved diversity of the work force within the DNR and at the Parks. Most under 18-year-olds are minorities, so we need to reach out to these groups to understand what they'd like for recreation because they are our future users.

These are just some of the components of the Business Plan that they (DNR) are working on, that will include more money for Parks that are seeing more expenses, and that have infrastructure issues and personnel shortages. They have \$900 million in differed maintenance issues! \$1.5 million has recently been released, but that will only make a small dent in the bigger issues.

The Business Plan is about 132 pages, and they are working on getting full approval for it. However, issues such as obtaining spending authority will require legislative approval, so we (us, the Friends Groups, the public) need to help our representatives understand that this is a priority and that we need legislation passed that will grant this type of spending authority (or at least some sort of spending authority within reasonable limits) so that money that is on hand can be used to solve issues before they become even more costly.

Some of the points in the Business Plan will call for increasing fees at larger properties, and for camping. Increasing the number of electrical connections at properties with camping is a priority as well. Allocating funds to properties with higher expenses is planned. This is important for Lapham Peak as we continue to add to the Park, such as the WRSB, and the Lodge, as examples, but the park does not (yet) get additional funds to maintain them.

Some of the Q&A items included:

Will the Business Plan be shared? Yes, once it is approved it will be shared with property managers and then groups such as ours will have access to it.

Can Friends Groups charge user fees to help fund Park Projects, such as charging fees for Candlelight Hikes? Steve said it's a lengthy process for the DNR to create a new revenue stream but if we (the Friends Group) wanted to do the charging like we do for a Colorama, he said it's an idea worth checking into.

How can we help lobby for change? The DNR cannot lobby, but we can. We can ask our legislators to come out and see the problems and help them understand the situation that needs changing. We can ban together with groups such as with the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks – maybe they could help organize us (65 Friends Groups) to get organized for this cause. A change in statute is required!

Are the Parks still under a 75% capacity restriction? Capacity numbers at properties have been done away with for the most part. This is now up to the properties to determine. Anne K mentioned even with "fall color" they have not turned people away.

As for increased spending authority, if approved, the first priorities would be for health and safety items, and then basic infrastructure – especially older infrastructure and electrical systems, sewer systems that are many many, years old. Colton mentioned deteriorating Park Road issues as another example. Green technology is also a priority, including solar, electric vehicles, LEED certification, etc. An increase in FTEs would be important as well, visitation is way up but staffing is currently down.

As a wrap up, if the increased spending authority is not granted, then to remain within budget, staff reductions would more than likely need to occur.

Anne Korman, DNR:

Anne K thanked Steve for his attendance and presentation and his interest in Lapham Peak. She mentioned that **Wisconsin Life** on **PBS** is highlighting Lapham Peak ([video is here](#))!

Anne K then shared that John Hillmer, had been nominated and selected as the Parks & Recreation Management Volunteer of the Year, 2021. She read the nomination material that had been submitted on his behalf. John H was caught surprised by all of this, as he was unaware that this was in the works and was very appreciative of the recognition.

Colton Kelly, DNR:

Colton echoed how incredible 2021 was, saying that we had the longest list of challenges ever, but it didn't slow us down at all. Board Members thanked Colton and Anne and the staff for all their continued great work and support.

Business Meeting:

John McCarthy put the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Resolution Request before the board to authorize him to sign for the grant application and project details going forward. This was approved unanimously.

Election of Board Members - we have 4 Board Members whose terms are expiring; several have agreed to serve another 3-year-term, and hearing no others from the floor, these 3 were approved unanimously:

- o Rita – Yes
- o Karl – Yes
- o Rick – Yes

For our open position, we know of one member of the Friends group who is interested in the position, and hearing no others from the floor, Melissa Jarecki was approved unanimously for a 3-year-term as well!

Meeting Adjourned: Motion by Rita, second by John H, approved unanimously at 8:23 pm

Respectfully submitted,

John Hillmer, Secretary, Friends of Lapham Peak