

***MINUTES OF THE
HIGHWAY, INFRASTRUCTURE & RECREATION COMMITTEE***

DAY & DATE: Tuesday, March 15, 2016
PLACE: Wood County Courthouse, 400 Market St., Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494, Conference Room 317A
MEETING TIME: 9:00 A.M.
ADJOURNMENT TIME: 9:23 A.M.
MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Al Breu, Secretary Dennis Polach, Member Marion Hokamp, Member William Winch, Vice-Chairman Trent Miner
OTHERS PRESENT: Chad Schooley, Park and Forestry Director; Sandra Green, Park and Forestry Office Supervisor; Fritz Schubert, Park and Forestry Forest Administrator; Bill Clendenning, County Board Supervisor; Bill Leichtnam, County Board Supervisor; Amy Sue Vruwink; Jere Hamel; Lance Pliml, Wood County Board Chairperson, arrived at 9:12 A.M.

1. Call meeting to order.

Meeting was called to order by A. Breu. T. Miner read a letter sent from a Biologist, Glenn Taylor from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Gatlinburg, TN who saw the issue in the Wisconsin Rapids Tribune regarding the Firewood Ban in Wood County. He is inquiring as they recently enacted a ban in 2015 on firewood that is not heat treated. He wanted to offer some background that would help with our decision in holding or rescinding the ordinance. If the ban is not upheld, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) will spread to the limits of the suitable ash resource. A ban would limit the threat of invasive forest pests from becoming established. This individual was not writing to include the county's decision on maintaining or rescinding the firewood ban, but simply wanted to provide additional information that may help assist in their decision.

Public Comments. Jere Hamel also mailed each County Board Member a packet of information regarding the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and his reasons for supporting the firewood ban in Wood County. Mr. Hamel provided his opinion regarding the ban. We're disregarding the information has been provided to this committee and there is no denying how these pests and diseases spread.

Member A. Breu or B. Leichtnam expressed they are not in favor of rescinding the ordinance or lifting the ban. The decision has been made and we should stick by it. A. Breu stated, "We're not going to stop the EAB, but we would like to slow it down and educate as many people as we can. The ban is in place for a reason. We will vote to maintain our January ban on the county board floor."

T. Miner does not believe the agenda item should move forward to the County Board. "There are reasons we did it. We can't have a firewood marshall at the park to monitor this. No, it will not stop EAB, but it will educate our customers and should stop our pests from gaining ground." T. Miner asked C. Schooley how many letters or notifications have we sent out regarding this. What was the feedback? C. Schooley stated there were approximately 8,000 mass e-mail's sent out and we had approximately 900 bounce backs (changed e-mail, etc.). As for feedback, there were only about less than ten individuals with comments or complaints.

F. Schubert asked if the resolution to rescind this firewood ban ordinance succeeds, how do we move forward and what are the committee's thoughts? It was stated by several individuals, at some point, the EAB will move into Wood County, our Ash trees will be infested, they will start dying and then we would then have to ban firewood into campgrounds anyway.

There were comments made regarding the cost of a bundle of wood compared to outside vendors. The cost of a bundle of firewood from a local vendor is about 6-7 pieces of wood, about one cubic foot and is between \$5 and \$6. A rack of wood purchased from one of our three campgrounds is approximately three cubic feet and will cost \$5.

B. Winch stated he was the one that made the original motion to move the ordinance to County Board and then to have the ordinance rescinded. He also stated he has had many comments from constituents. One asked, "When we bring firewood into the campground and burn it, aren't pests burned along with it? Couldn't we just change the ordinance to indicate if you bring wood in, you must burn it or leave it at the campground? We have wood moving on the highway every day to paper and saw mills, it lies on the ground for a week before it's processed, why isn't that an issue?" Even saying the wood will be burned during those 5-7 days at the campground is when the problem arises of when that bug escapes and moves and begins destruction.

Mr. Hamel said EAB appears at certain times of the year, usually from April to October. At any such time, the bug could escape and move. During transportation such as to the paper mill or saw mill, those employees are under restrictions from Department of Agricultural, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCAP) in which they sign an agreement they will not receive hardwood or ash products during a certain time period. They have one day to process this wood. If they don't, the fine is upwards of \$10K.

Other comments:

The bug is only in Ash, correct? It's only one bug in one type of tree, but overall, it's more than one bug and one species of tree. It's Asian Long Horn Beetle, the Gypsy Moth, Oak Wilt and more. Private campgrounds do not have restrictions of firewood brought in. F. Schubert stated he believes it's the responsibility of every landowner or business owner to do what is right. All you can do is take care of your own resources, do the best you can, hope the education will spread and they will follow suit. The cost for a rack of firewood remains at \$5.00.

2. Discuss and possibly act on resolution to rescind the Firewood Ban ordinance, 16-1-13.
Discussed, not acted on. The committee decided to not sponsor the rescinding of the Firewood Ordinance 16-1-13.
3. Discuss and possibly act on policy regarding firewood brought into the campgrounds owned and operated by the Wood County Park and Forestry Department.
Discussed, not acted on.
4. Motion to adjourn. Motion by A. Breu and seconded by D. Polach.

Dennis Polach, Secretary



Minutes taken by Sandra Green, Wood County Park & Forestry, Office Supervisor