

**Kickapoo Reserve Management Board
Meeting Minutes for February 20, 2025**
Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center

Board members present: Travis Downing (Chair), Barb Sarnowski (via Zoom), Joel Charles (via Zoom), Julie Hoel, Kjetil Garvin, Reggie Nelson (via Zoom), Scott Lind

Board members absent: AJ Mann, Bill Quackenbush, Dave Maxwell, Luke Zahm

Staff members present: Jason Leis, Jackie Yocum, Amy Dvorak, Amber Burch

Others in attendance: Lonnie Muller (Episcope), Jody Rader (Friends of KVR; via Zoom)

Downing called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

Chair Downing read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

Leis explained he put the wrong date for the next Finance Committee meeting on the agenda. It should be April 8, 2025. Hoel asked about the status of the budget. Leis suggested they talk about it during the other issues portion of the agenda. Lind made a motion to approve the agenda. Nelson seconded the motion, and the motion carried with all ayes.

Leis confirmed the agenda was properly posted.

Public input: Lonnie Muller said the Vernon County Board of Supervisors passed the comprehensive land use plan.

Lind said the next Finance Committee meeting should actually be on April 7, 2025.

Consent agenda:

The minutes from the December 19, 2024 and January 16, 2025 meetings were provided. Hoel motioned to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Garvin, and the motion passed with all ayes.

Friends of KVR Update:

No representative from the Friends of Kickapoo Valley Reserve was initially in attendance. Jody Rader joined via Zoom later in the meeting and at 6:29 PM, prior to beginning the other issues agenda item, she provided an update.

The monthly meeting occurred last week. Rader said they had a nice presentation on the history of the Kickapoo Valley Forest School, which she said was nice because there are many new Friends members. At the next meeting, they will discuss some of the extra fundraising money for the school.

Rader said at the next meeting, they will discuss the potential of creating a strategic plan for the Friends. She said with the Reserve creating a master plan, they thought they would create one to guide future plans for spending money and investing.

The March newsletter will come out soon. The Friends are gearing up for the Earth Day events. Margaret Farley is leading that. They will also start working on the Garden Tour, which will probably be in July.

Hoel said there was a policy manual for the Friends at some point, and she asked if Rader had seen them before. Rader said she was not aware of it but agreed it would be good to look at. Yocum said she may be able to find it.

Land transfer completion update:

Downing said the land from the Mississippi Valley Conservancy has officially been transferred to the Kickapoo Valley Reserve's ownership. The paperwork was signed on Tuesday, February 18, 2025. It comprises 16 acres.

Property manager position update:

Leis said we are doing interviews now. There was one interview yesterday and two tomorrow. A decision will be made next week.

Education and Tourism Committee:

Burch summarized the current education programs. The winter session for Nature Bound is wrapping up soon, and the registration for the spring session just opened. The ski club has not happened this year due to a lack of snow. School groups continue to come to the Reserve. Summer camp registration opened.

We are offering the Master Naturalist Instructor Training in April, which will train staff to hold the Master Naturalist classes. The goal is to have all full-time staff attend the training.

We estimate 590 people attended Winter Festival. The Resolution Run had 42 registrants. The revenue was \$7,228.

Canvases for the Creative Communities program are due on Monday. We have already started receiving some. The canvases will be displayed in the lobby area with the grand opening on March 1, 2025. The canvases will be sold in an online auction as in previous years. The student art experience will be on March 5, 2025.

We are holding the Ephemeral Art Series, which is an adult art experience each Monday in March. There is copper embossing, printmaking, Mexican folk art, cake decorating, and pen/colored pencil drawing. Hoel asked if many people were signed up. Yocum said approximately 20 people have registered. The cost is \$35 per class.

Earth Week starts on April 19, 2025. Events will be announced as we get closer to the date. The Friends of KVR will do a poetry contest.

The 25th anniversary celebration will be June 7, 2025. The event will start at 1:00 PM with a presentation and reception.

Burch said the committee reviewed the highlights on the management plan. The next meeting will review specific topics.

The next Education and Tourism Committee meeting is scheduled for March 6, 2025, at 5:30 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Finance Committee:

Leis said the finances look good. There is 46 percent of the fiscal year remaining. The Operating Budget to Actual Report was shared. Leis explained appropriation 16100 is an account where we have to use all of the money or we lose it. Appropriation 12100 is a carryover account. The limited term employment line item is always budgeted low.

Hoel asked where the rent from the Kickapoo Valley Forest School goes. The Revenue and Expense Summary was shared, which showed it gets deposited into appropriation 12100. Leis said we received \$16,200 in rent, and the second portion of rent is due soon.

Lind asked Leis to explain the major project costs we anticipate. He said the roof of the Visitor Center needs to be replaced and should cost around \$100,000. Hoel asked if the state provides any funding for the roof. Leis said no because we have enough money to cover it. Leis said the other project is to replace the heat pumps. They are \$10,000 each, and there are eight total.

Leis said he is working with the state on the bid documents for the roof. Hoel asked where he was in the process. Leis said he needs to complete the specifications. We are responsible to do it since the roof is considered a small project. Lind offered to help.

Hoel asked if it was feasible to complete the roof replacement before June 7, 2025, the 25th anniversary event, and if the money has to be spent by the end of the fiscal year. Leis said it does not have to be spent by the end of the fiscal year, and whether it can be done by June 7 depends on who makes the bid. There was a discussion regarding when the contractor would be paid and how that might affect when the roof is completed.

The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for April 7, 2025, at 9:00 AM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Land Management Committee:

Downing said the committee is still working on the management plan. The goals and objectives were set at the last meeting. During the next meeting, the committee will work on prioritizing those, and the committee will also work on the Mississippi Valley Conservancy land transfer that was just completed. Once the land management plan is done, the committee will start on the cultural resources management plan. Leis said Bill Quackenbush sent him a lot of edits on the cultural resources management plan. He said Bill went through most of the previous plan.

The next Land Management Committee meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2025, at 5:30 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Other issues:

Leis said he received an email that our budget went through the Governor's Office, so the Governor approved our budget as we submitted it. There are more steps to go in getting it approved.

Hoel asked if the Board approved the budget before it was submitted. Leis said it did not come in front of the full Board, but it went through the executive committee. Hoel said she believed it was supposed to be approved by the Board first. She said she was surprised to see a request for another full-time position. Downing said the new full-time position is just turning two positions into one. He said they tried a similar request with Ben's position years ago, and now they are trying it again. Hoel said it was not discussed with the Board. Leis said the requests before this one were not brought before the entire Board either. Hoel asked if the current executive committee was aware of the request for a full-time position. Downing said yes. Leis said he also spoke with human resources about it. He was told to get the executive committee's approval on the budget, so that was what he did. He said most of the budget work is done by the financial managers.

Leis said the budget also included an increase in lease costs for vehicles. Hoel said she had a question about that. Leis said we lease the Chevrolet Colorado. He said the financial managers suggested we ask for an increase in the lease costs, because if we have another position, there are usually costs associated with that such as a new vehicle.

Hoel said the budget also mentioned 300 acres of invasive species work. She asked if we identified areas for this work. Leis said he couldn't remember the exact amount mentioned in the budget, but the Reserve has at least that number of acres of invasives to work on. He said the number was brought over from prior budgets.

Hoel requested a change in the way we review events and programs at the Board meetings. She said she would like to see a summary of past years and how the numbers compare over the years. Hoel said it would be helpful to look at the bigger picture. Lind said he could see the value of sharing that information at the Board meetings. Yocum said the biennial reports contain a lot of that information.

Lind showed a light fixture that will likely replace all of the outdoor wall light fixtures at the Reserve because it has very little blue light in it. This light fixture is 1,800K, and the ones we have now are 2,700K. Lind said it doesn't scatter to the sky in the same way as the traditional light, and many animal species have a very strong reaction to blue light, which this fixture doesn't have. Lind said he would like to replace the light outside the maintenance building. Pieter van Zyl is 3-D printing shields for some of the lights outside the Visitor Center. Leis took down the light fixtures on the entrance sign at the Visitor Center, and Lind put a film on them to reduce the color temperature as a trial. The film will only lower the light to 2,700K.

Downing said there will be an executive committee meeting immediately after the regular Board meeting. He asked Sarnowski if she could participate. She said she could.

Adjournment:

Hoel made a motion and Nelson seconded to adjourn the meeting. It passed with all ayes. The meeting adjourned at 6:47 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 20, 2025, at 6:00 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Dvorak".

Minutes transcribed by Amy Dvorak, 2/25/2025