

**Kickapoo Reserve Management Board
Meeting Minutes for March 19, 2026**
Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center

Board members present: Travis Downing (Chair), Dan Catherman (via Zoom), Scott Lind, Reggie Nelson (via Zoom), Kelly Rueckheim, Barb Sarnowski, Damian Thundercloud (via Zoom), Lyndsey Winchel (via Zoom), Luke Zahm

Board members absent: Kjetil Garvin, Bill Quackenbush

Staff members present: Jason Leis, Amy Dvorak, Jackie Leis, Jesse Haney

Others in attendance: La Farge Episcope (Lonnie Muller), Christian Malanka, Jamie Gudgeon (Friends of KVR)

Chair Downing called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Downing read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

Zahm made a motion to approve the agenda, and Sarnowski seconded. The motion passed with all ayes.

Leis confirmed the agenda was properly posted.

Winchel requested amendments to the draft minutes of the February 19, 2026 meeting. Winchel wanted it to be noted that Leis intended to make the Education Coordinator position part-time. She requested to include that she, Thundercloud, Lind, and Rueckheim were not in favor of this change. Winchel asked to change the minutes to reflect that we had to postpone the powerline discussion while waiting for answers from Dairyland Power Cooperative. Amendments were made. Sarnowski motioned to approve the amended minutes from the February 2026 meeting. Rueckheim seconded the motion, and it passed with all ayes.

Chairperson and/or Executive Director report:

Neither Downing nor Leis had a report.

Budget Report:

The Appropriation Budget as of March 11, 2026 was shared on the screen. Leis reviewed the report and provided explanations as needed. The appropriated amount for the 12400 account is higher than the operating budget due to a change in what percentage of Haney's and Leis' positions are paid out of this account. The accountants are moving money from the 12100 account to the 12400 to make up for the shortfalls. Leis will try to get this changed for the next budget cycle with the help of Thundercloud and legislators.

The Revenue Expense Report as of February 28, 2026. There were no questions.

Friends of KVR Update:

Jamie Gudgeon provided a report from the Friends of Kickapoo Valley Reserve. The Friends are doing a new quarterly program called Walking with Friends. The first will be on March 28, 2026, walking along Old 131 Trail at 10 AM. The annual highway cleanup will be on April 18, 2026, and the poetry contest will be on April 25, 2026. The Garden Walk planning is beginning, and it will be held on July 12, 2026.

Public appearances:

None.

Possible statement on proposed transmission line route:

The draft statement was shared on the screen.

Rueckheim made a motion to approve the statement as written, and Sarnowski seconded.

Winchel requested to change the wording so it better illustrates the harm it would do to archaeological sites. There was a discussion, and it was changed from "...and pose risks to sensitive ecological systems and cultural resources..." to "...cause irreversible harm to sensitive ecological systems and cultural resources..."

Zahm asked to change the wording from "This mission reflects decades of collaborative..." to "The Reserve is jointly managed by the State of Wisconsin and Ho-Chunk Nation with a mission that reflects decades of collaborative..."

Lind made a motion to accept the Opposition Statement of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Management Board Regarding the Proposed 765 kV Transmission Line with changes. Rueckheim seconded, and the motion passed with all ayes.

Ralph E. Nuzum Reforestation Grant update:

Leis shared that the "Ralph Nuzum Driftless Dialogue Lecture Series in the Kickapoo Valley" proposal was approved for funding by the Kickapoo Valley (Nuzum) Reforestation Fund. We will receive \$8,500 each year for two years beginning in July 2026.

Thundercloud asked Leis if he ever considered applying for the Vernon County Community Development Grant, which is made possible by contributed funds from the Ho-Chunk Nation. Leis said he saw it but has not applied. He will look into it.

Creative Communities Canvas Project and Art Programs update:

Jackie Leis provided an update on the Creative Communities Program. The Student Art Experience was on March 4, 2026. There were 10 artists and almost 100 students. One of the projects was the mural in the meeting room. There are canvases on display in the exhibit area, and the online auction closes at the end of March. The sale of the canvases covers the cost of the Student Art Experience.

Hiring update:

Leis said the paperwork was submitted for the Education Coordinator position. The job will be posted soon on wisconsin.jobs. Sarnowski and Rueckheim requested to be on the interview panel.

Winchel suggested positing the job on LinkedIn and Indeed.com. Rueckheim asked how the salary is determined. Leis explained there is a range set, taking into consideration the pay of current employees doing similar work, and the hired individual will be paid within that range commensurate with experience.

There are two open LTE positions for field crew members and one open LTE position for a law enforcement officer.

Education and Tourism Committee:

There was no committee meeting since the February 2026 board meeting.

The next Education and Tourism Committee meeting is scheduled for April 9, 2026 at 5:30 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Finance Committee:

There was no committee meeting since the February 2026 board meeting.

The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for April 6, 2026, at 9:00 AM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Land Management Committee:

There was no committee meeting since the February 2026 board meeting.

The next Land Management Committee meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2026, at 5:30 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Board Member Matters:

Lind said he was late getting on the agenda for the March Town of Whitestown meeting, but he appeared before the Town of Whitestown Board and asked them to appoint him for the next term for the KRMB. They will vote on it in April.

Request for future agenda topics:

Winchel requested to revisit the future of the outdoor classrooms.

Closed session:

Zahm made a motion to convene in closed session pursuant to Wis. Stat. 19.185(1)(c): Considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility. The purpose is for discussion of personnel and employment issues. Sarnowski seconded the motion, and the motion passed with all ayes. The meeting was convened into closed session. All members of the public and non-Board members left the room and Zoom.

Sarnowski made a motion to reconvene into open session, and Lind seconded. The motion passed with all ayes.

Adjournment:

Sarnowski made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rueckheim seconded, and it passed unanimously with all ayes. The meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 9, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Minutes transcribed by Amy Dvorak, Executive Assistant