

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2013
6 PM – MERIDIAN SERVICE CENTER

Members Present: Julie Brixie, Frank Hatfield, James Kielbaso, Jon Mayes, Robert Rusch, Margo Smith, Mark Stephens, Steve Webster

Members Absent: None

Staff: Land and Management Coordinator Jane Greenway

Others: Layne Cameron, Steve Brunner, Mike Thomas

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chair Kielbaso called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

2. Approve Agenda

Hearing no objections, Chair Kielbaso accepted the agenda as presented.

3. Public Remarks

Layne Cameron summarized his visit to the Red Cedar Glen Preserve with Township Engineering and Public Works Department Director Ray Severy; summarized his correspondence to the Land Preservation Board (included in the meeting packet under Communications), and stated the trail was improved to accommodate shared uses, is safe to traverse and erosion and maintenance should not be an issue. When asked about his 2011 report regarding the erosion, path width, and grades, Mr. Cameron replied when a mountain bike trail is developed, it is normally narrow and single track but the trail improvements in the Red Cedar Glen are the type you typically see for shared uses with improved sight distances and grades.

Steve Brunner stated the trail in the Red Cedar Glen Preserve isn't the kind of trail that aggressive mountain bikers would seek out. It is an inviting path that would provide access to the entire area. This trail is beautiful to walk and would be great for a family bike ride and believes the trails in Legg Park are under-utilized.

4. Approve Minutes
 - a. September 11, 2013 – page 5, correct spelling of “questioned”
 - b. September 27, 2013 – no corrections

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2013 MINUTES AS CORRECTED AND THE SEPTEMBER 27, 2013 MINUTES AS PRESENTED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

5. Communications
 - a. Summary of MMSI Wetland Restoration, Leslie Kuhn
 - b. Red Cedar Glen Preserve, Trail Improvement Report, Layne Cameron
 - c. Michigan Nature Magazine, Julie Brixie
 - d. AEW Engineering, Ember Oaks Drainage District Poster

Board Members discussed the Red Cedar Glen site restoration poster developed by AEW, expressed their approval of the project, thanked Board Member Brixie for including the Michigan Nature Magazine article about the natural trail.

BOARD MEMBER STEPHENS MOVED, BOARD MEMBER MAYES SECONDED, TO ACCEPT AND PLACE THE ITEMS OF COMMUNICATION ON FILE. Voice vote. Motion passed.

6. Presentations

None

7. New Business
 - a. Red Cedar Glen tree planting

Coordinator Greenway reported 48 trees have been cut down in the area will receive replacement. Chair Kielbaso, Mike Thomas, Carla Clos and others will be going out to the site on Thursday to stake locations for the new trees in the Preserve. When asked about the planting approach, Chair Kielbaso replied they will be taking into account the open areas and the new water feature but is concerned about drawing people to specific locations without offering a more permanent path or observation area. When asked which side of channels will remain open for the 10 to 12 feet wide maintenance easement, Chair Kielbaso replied those access trails will remain open and will talk over with the Engineer tomorrow. It was suggested to plant on the west side of the bigger channel where the skunk cabbage is located because it is a more sensitive, wet area and hopefully the trillium will come back and leave the higher ground open. It was suggested to discuss these issues on site with the Engineer at the site on Thursday. It was suggested to have Nick Sanchez inspect for possible invasive species around the new trees later this fall and early spring. Mike

Thomas summarized the language in the easements. Interested individuals will meet on Thursday at approximately 1:30 pm at the end of Sylvan Glen Road for the tree staking project.

- b. Northwest Land Preserve – restoration planting, approval of funds for volunteer pizza party on October 13, 2013

Coordinator Greenway summarized the budget for the restoration planting project, the planting dates and times and since all of the funds have not been used, she summarized the request for funds for a volunteer pizza party on October 13, 2013.

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER WEBSTER SECONDED, FOR THE LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD TO AUTHORIZE THE EXPENDITURE OF UP TO \$350 OF MAINTENANCE FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF FEEDING THE VOLUNTEERS AT THE NORTHWEST LAND PRESERVE PLANTING.

Roll Call:

AYES: Robert Rusch, Jon Mayes, Mark Stephens, Julie Brixie, Steve Webster, Margo Smith, Frank Hatfield, James Kielbaso
NAYS: None

Motion passed.

- c. Trail Use

Board Member Smith asked to schedule time for discussion regarding use of the trails in the Preserves particularly regarding non-motorized vehicle use. She asked to schedule this discussion before any motion is offered to allow non-motorize use in Red Cedar Glen Preserve because once it is allowed in one preserve, it may set a precedent to allow in other preserves. Voters voted to set aside natural areas to preserve for prosperity, believes non-motorized vehicles inflict damage and this is not the intent of the Ordinance.

BOARD MEMBER SMITH MOVED, BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD SECONDED, THAT TRAILS IN PRESERVES WILL NOT BE IMPROVED OR CREATED FOR NON-MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL VEHICLES.

Discussion:

- Non-motorized use is currently allowed on the Rysberg Preserve because it is important link in the trail system and because the trail was designed prior to township acquisition

- The language in the Ordinance allows for non-motorized vehicle use on a case-by-case basis
- This would ignore the Township's greater goals for promoting non-motorized transportation and it is better for the environment to allow non-motorized use.
- Does not believe non-motorized vehicles inflict intentional damage
- The trail through the Red Cedar Glen is a crucial link in the pedestrian/bicycle pathway system and destinations.
- Read Ordinance section 22.101 "...that non-motorized use isn't allowed" and section 22.100 "...unless posted otherwise, bicycles are prohibited" and believes the Ordinance is not in the business of providing recreation or a transportation link and the Millage language did not contain language except for preserving the land
- Historically, if a path is on the site when purchased, it would remain on the site and once the public had access to the site, the township would not construct additional pathways
- Would like to explore the idea of providing a non-motorized transportation path from east to west across the Township, knows it will be at a cost and would like some assurances that bikes will not travel off the center path and if they do, can close it
- The Land Preservation Ordinance conflicts with itself by allowing and not allowing bicycles and this issue was discussed in depth when the Rysberg property (aka Central Meridian Uplands) was purchased
- Reviewed the transportation pathways on the Greenspace Plan
- Reviewed the damaged areas and trails the children have constructed on the Sturk (aka Southwest Meridian Uplands) parcel and if it will be necessary to restore those portions back to nature or keep the pathways; will need to verify if those pathways are on Township property or not
- Should allow bikes and trails through Red Cedar Glen to make a connection to the parks
- Bikes are allowed in all parks and there have been no problems with damage in the parks
- The preserves are paid for by all taxpayers, should be open to all users, can't eliminate people from getting into our preserves or it will make it hard to ask for a future millage
- Suggest a pathway could be engineered to keep people out of the highly sensitive areas
- The millage campaign was for permanent preservation but that doesn't mean we can't allow pedestrian or bike access and also noted that the average person believes the land preserves are parks
- Concerned about adding an item on the agenda that includes a motion that was not on the original agenda and the public is not aware of it
- The millage doesn't mention recreation; has seen significant bike damage in Legg Park on the trails and along the river bank

- Pedestrians cause damage such as putting logs across wet areas for access; have discussed with Director of Parks & Recreation who states there have not been significant damage in Legg Park and if there is, it should be reported to the office
- Concerns expressed that this is moving too quickly
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources has provisions for conversions and mitigation; can't predict what will happen in the future and need to make a decision on a case-by-case basis
- Suggested the motion be tabled for future research or withdraw the motion
- Concern about the area becoming degraded, invasion of invasive species, thinks the preserves are here for a specific reason and they are not a park
- Suggested looking for another way to create an access other than through the Red Cedar Glen Preserve such as the utility easement off Bonanza
- Master Plan and Greenspace Plan are products that can be revised
- Is not against bicycles but does not believe it is appropriate use in preserves
- The motion is about trail improvements and creation and not specifically about bicycles and non-motorized vehicles
- Chair Kielbaso was asked to read the motion:

TRAILS IN PRESERVES WILL NOT BE IMPROVED OR CREATED FOR MOTORIZED OR NON-MOTORIZED RECREATION VEHICLES.

Discussion:

- Mike Thomas offered a statement from Leslie Kuhn about biking in the preserves and parks
- Concern was raised about this item not being on the agenda, voting on the issue without allowing the public to offer input and properties should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis

Board Member Brixie called the question.

Voice vote. Motion failed 3-5

8. Old Business

- a. Red Cedar Glen Preserve, east-west, non-motorized transportation access (bicycle)

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER STEPHENS SECONDED, TO ALLOW BICYCLES IN THE RED CEDAR GLEN PRESERVE FOR ONE YEAR AND THEN EVALUATE THE IMPACT ON THE RED CEDAR GLEN AFTER THAT TIME.

Discussion:

- Open to suggestions to keep bicycles on the trails (fencing, signage, etc.)
- Signage, especially educational signage is important
- Suggested using the Mountain Bike Club recommendations (Layne Cameron summarized that the current plan addresses erosion, sight lines and grading to reduce high speed)
- Asked to see a written plan that shows how to keep the wheels on the trail
- How do we keep bikers and hikers out of the sensitive spots (install fencing, trees, plantings, boulders and signage)
- Are there specific areas more highly scored where we wish to keep people out of (the river loop - could use signage and boulders but walkers will go around them)
- How will we pay for it (if paved, the Pedestrian/Bicycle Pathway Millage would pay for it)
- Walkers are creating more damage than bikers
- Want to create a path to allow access from one location to the next
- Thinks we should look at an alternative route other than through the Preserve
- Already have a path in this area on property owned by the Township and believes this is an opportunity to create an acceptable access
- What about the long term goals for this area
- Stewardship is education and we need to invite, educate and get their support for what we are trying to accomplish; if educate, believes there will be less conflict in the future
- Would like to reduce the timeframe; suggest change language to “unless significant damage is noted from bikes in other areas” and not be locked into one year
- Suggested changing language to “...for one year, with periodic evaluation and installation of signage and fencing and/or barricades”
- Whose responsibility is it to install signage, fencing, barricades to prevent the damage
- Want to see a plan and is willing to meet with Township Engineer to review a written plan
- Suggested creating an advisory committee to create a plan
- Asked if there is another source of funds that could be used for these preventative measures

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER SMITH SECONDED, TO TABLE THE MOTION UNTIL NEXT MONTH TO SEE IF A PLAN CAN BE DEVELOPED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

9. Land Management Coordinator Report

a. Red Cedar Glen Restoration Project Progress

It was noted that the new trail has been discussed previously

b. Davis/Foster Land Preserve Demolition Project Progress

There are big piles of soil on site that will be used by the contractor, Brian VanOrder, Michigan Demolition and Excavating, for backfill. Mr. VanOrder is in the process of completing the asbestos evaluation. Once the asbestos has been removed, then the demolition will begin. Jane will send out an email with the demolition date. Once the project is completed, Jane will develop a peaceful seating area or overlook with interpretative signage that will including the partners involved in this project.

c. Deer Management Project Update

To date, 27 deer have been harvested with nine in the early antlerless harvest. The majority have come from the Lake Lansing North Preserve. There have been no significant complaints. When asked if it is working beyond harvesting deer, Coordinator Greenway replied that a study showed that it can take up to five years for deer to move into an area after a herd has been removed. MSU is conducting a study right now and believe the deer have a specific home range, such as the ones in the Forest Hills area, stay in that area.

d. Phragmites treatment on Towner Road Wetland and Hubbel Preserve

Nick Sanchez treated the Land Preserve for phragmites. Also noted Leslie Kuhn's report under Communications.

10. Other

None

11. Public Comment

None

12. Closed Session

BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD MOVED, BOARD MEMBER MAYES SECONDED TO ENTER INTO CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS LAND ACQUISITION.

Roll Call:

AYES: Julie Brixie, Steve Webster, Frank Hatfield, Jon Mayes, Margo Smith,
Mark Stephens, James Kielbaso

NAYS: None

The Board entered into closed session at 8:05 pm.

BOARD MEMBER SMITH MOVED, BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD SECONDED,
TO RETURN TO OPEN SESSION.

Roll Call:

AYES: Julie Brixie, Steve Webster, Frank Hatfield, Jon Mayes, Margo Smith,
Mark Stephens, James Kielbaso

NAYS: None

The Board returned to open session at 8:29 pm.

13. Adjournment

BOARD MEMBER SMITH MOVED, BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD SECONDED,
TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.