

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 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, Park and Recreation Department Administrative Assistant II Robin Faust

Others: William White

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chair Kielbaso called the meeting to order at 8:20 pm.

2. Approve Agenda

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER RUSCH SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS SUBMITTED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

3. Public Remarks

William White, White Brothers Music, Okemos Road, voiced support for the Land Preservation Program and a concern that only some of the parcels have signage but none of the parcels have rule signage. Residents are confused on if they can walk or bike on these parcels. He is concerned that people see this Board treating the parcels as sanctuaries so it means hands-off and the parcels cannot be accessed or visited.

Bill McConnell, Manitou Road, Okemos, stated he attended the Red Cedar Preserve meeting with Engineering Director Ray Severy to discuss pedestrian and bicycle access through the Preserve. He is in support of the new bicycle access proposal through the Preserve and if it is properly signed, the majority of bicyclists will stay on a designated trail.

4. Approve Minutes for October 9, 2013

BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD MOVED, BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 9, 2013 MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

5. Communications

None

6. Presentations

None

7. Old Business

a. Red Cedar Glen – bicycle access

Board Member Hatfield offered the following:

- History: have received complaints by bikers and about bikers; Red Cedar Glen Preserve is not posted to allow for biking (least important, never enforced, rule is typically ignored); this is a dangerous trail (major complaints are eroded, gravel slopes, difficult to control bike, overhanging branches, wet stream crossings)
- Problems for LPAB: damage by bikers; broken down stream banks; erosion; widening of trails by grabbing, twisting and pruning branches; area is unsightly; this is bad for trees; is a danger to users sharing narrow trail with bikes
- Compromise: continue to post “no bikes” (or remove sign but do not pass motion to allow bikes); continue informal policy of not enforcing unless there are serious problems; concerned with the creation of new trails (has not happened, despite continued biking); structures (has not happened, despite continued biking); LPAB will maintain the current trail, fix erosion, trim overhanging branches.
- Why is this a compromise? Bikers GAIN continued, responsible use (as in past); safe trail (already constructed, will be maintained); Bikers ACCEPT possible enforcement of “no bikes” rule if there is extraordinary, unprecedented damage (new trails, structures). LPAB GAIN no complaints from public regarding violation of intent of Land Preservation Program; no precedents set regarding other preserves; retain power to enforce “no bikes” rule in extraordinary situations; reduced damage (already accomplished – bridges, widening); LPAB ACCEPT no routine enforcement of “no bikes” rules (which was never done), take responsibility for and expense of trail maintenance.

Board Member Brixie reported she has worked with Board Members Stephens and Webster with Engineering Director Severy to offer the plan for the one year temporary bicycle access through the Red Cedar Glen Preserve (copy in the meeting packet). She is proposing clarification of the restoration of log placement on trails to allow for easier and safer cross country skiing. The objective of the plan is to get people to act in a responsible way and believes this can be accomplished through education (promotional spots on HOM-TV, signage, programs, etc.). Director Severy has volunteered to work with a potential Eagle Scout could develop proper river crossings.

**BOARD MEMBER BRIXIED MOVED THE FOLLOWING RED CEDAR GLEN PRESERVE PLAN FOR ONE YEAR OF TEMPORARY BICYCLE ACCESS:**

Bicycle traffic will be allowed on the main trail of the Red Cedar Glen Preserve from the entrance at the cul-de-sac on Sylvan Glen Rd. to Legg Park resulting in an important connection for non-motorized vehicles from Dobie Road through to Van Atta Road. **Bicycle access in the Red Cedar Glen Preserve does not imply bicycle access in other land preserves.** This access will be allowed for one year during which time impact to the natural environment by bicycles can be assessed. Control measures will be implemented to prevent damage to the flora from bicycles. The preserve will be monitored throughout the one year period to assess impacts, if any, to the preserve. After one year, the impacts to the preserve will be evaluated and a determination will be made if the access should be permanent.

Currently, bicycles must take either Grand River Avenue or Jolly Road to get through to Legg/Harris Nature Center. There are numerous neighborhoods, parks and destinations between Dobie Road and Van Atta and Grand River Ave. and Jolly Rd. that will have better connectivity if this accommodation is made.

Residents from Sylvan Glen, Forest Hills, the Shoals, Cornell Woods, Shaker Heights, River Downs, Dobie Heights, The Ponds and other neighborhoods would have a beautiful, pleasant way to travel to Legg Park and the Harris Nature Center or just to get through to Van Atta for other destinations. The Meridian Township Board has adopted a policy manual which states *“Meridian Township exists to create a sustainable community through the most effective use of available resources that achieve the highest quality of life”*. Allowing bicycles on the main trail of the Red Cedar Preserve supports the global ends statement of the Township Policy Manual. It also will help with Township policies to increase alternative transportation opportunities, preserve clean air and water (by reducing carbon emissions), to minimize global climate change, to improve walkability, and to promote healthy physical activity.

Control measures need to be implemented to prevent “off the main trail” biking to avoid vegetation damage or soil erosion in sensitive areas of the preserve. Control measures may also be desirable to move current trails and divert them to more appropriate areas. Some of this has already been implemented as part of the site restoration of the drain project. Control measures include the following: Education, signage, physical barriers and installation of crossing at the stream area next to the river. Education may include a HOM-TV three minute promotional spot to inform the public the importance of keeping bikes on the trail in the preserve and protecting sensitive wetland flora. This spot would be able to run between programs on HOM-TV and be aired for a long period of time. Additionally, other feature spots in appropriate shows may be produced and aired on the topic of the Red Cedar Glen restoration.

Trails in the preserve will be designated as “foot traffic only” trails or “the main trail”. Signage will be installed at the Sylvan Glen and Legg Park entrances to the preserve stating bikes allowed on the main trail only. An educational sign at the main entrance elaborating on the need to protect flora may be included, explaining the foot traffic only protocol for single file walkers to maintain a width conducive to preserving the natural beauty of the preserve and eliminate the destruction of sensitive flora that may be found in the preserve.

Small foot traffic only signs and small no bikes signs will be placed at the Middle Path (MP) on the map and the main path through the preserve. In addition, coming from the other direction (from Legg Park) a sign will be placed at the trail split (LPS on the map) before you get to the ~~Sylvan Glen~~ **Red Cedar Glen** Preserve. This will discourage bikers from entering this sensitive area and keep walkers single file on the path that is along the river.

Physical barriers shall be installed mainly in the form of logs. Several large logs have been strategically placed in areas where bicycle traffic is not desired as part of the restoration. Additional logs shall be moved to cover up trails that are not desired. Also logs may be placed at the trail spits to create an angle of entry suitable for pedestrians but not cyclists.

At the crossing a proposed Eagle scout project\* will be laying cabled 4 x 4's or 6 x 6's with 4 inch spacing, perpendicular to the foot path so that walkers will not put logs across the stream/wet area causing widening of the wet area. This will still allow water to flow through these beams and over them in high water times.

Foot traffic only signs should be used if we are going to create a pathway along the newly created features of the Red Cedar Glen preserve. These should also be used in any preserve that we deem to have sensitive aspects and to encourage walkers/~~bikers~~ to stay on the beaten paths.

Signage will be paid for by the Land Preservation fund, the crossing will be paid for by volunteers (Eagle Scout project perhaps?) and the physical barriers shall be used from materials found in the preserve. \*This measure will only be implemented if outside funding or volunteer work is secured.

**AND MOVE TO ALLOW BICYCLES ON THE MAIN TRAIL, ONLY, OF THE RED CEDAR GLEN PRESERVE FOR ONE YEAR, DURING WHICH TIME CONTROL MEASURES WILL BE IMPLEMENTED AS DEPICTED IN THE PLAN TO PREVENT DAMAGE TO THE PRESERVE FROM BICYCLES AND THE PRESERVE WILL BE MONITORED TO ASSESS IMPACTS. AFTER ONE YEAR, THE IMPACTS (IF ANY) WILL BE EVALUATED AND A DETERMINATION WILL BE MADE IF THE BICYCLE ACCESS SHOULD BE MADE PERMANENT.**

Supported by Board Member Stephens:

Discussion:

- If the motion is approved, then the plan is approved as is
- What is the recommendation for physical barriers
- Does not believe there will be trouble from responsible bikers, but there will always be those few who will go around barriers and cause trouble
- Questioned having signage illustrating single file walking and installation signage to stay on current trail
- Accompanying map not totally correct; #2, #3, and #4 on private property; will work with Coordinator Greenway on it
- Would like to see single file foot traffic in sensitive flora areas to control future trail widening

By consensus, the word “bikers” was removed from the last sentence in paragraph #10.

- Concerned with use of logs across trails to stop access
- Suggest monitoring and reporting about the area throughout the year; may need to close the trail to bikes before the year is up
- Need active maintenance plan
- Do not want this to be a precedent for the other land preserves, especially the ones who are not set up for bikes where there are special features that need to be preserved.

By consensus, the following statement was added to the first paragraph, after the first sentence: “Bicycle access in the Red Cedar Glen does not imply bicycle access in other land preserves.”

- Need the measurable time period of one year; good experimental time period

- As parent encourage signage because if sign up not to go in, then we cannot go in
- May not needs as many physical barriers as indicated.

By consensus, the last two sentences of paragraph #8 were removed.

BOARD MEMBER STEPHENS OFFERED THE FRIENDLY AMENDMENT TO REMOVE #2, #, 3, AND #4 FROM THE MAP. Supported by Board Member Brixie.

- Currently have extra set of eyes in area throughout the Township's deer harvest program
- Question need of additional physical barrier at item #5 and #6
- If Eagle Scout project is suggested, would recommend the Land Preservation Advisory Board pay for it.
- Paragraph #7, change the word "Sylvan Glen" for Red Cedar Glen"

Roll Call

AYES: Robert Rusch, Jon Mayes, Stephen Webster, Mark Stephens, Julie Brixie

NAYS: Margo Smith, Frank Hatfield, James Kielbaso

Motion passed 5-3

8. New Business

a. Non-motorized vehicle use on land preserves

Board Member Smith asked to table this item.

b. The Stewardship Network – Financial Support

Coordinator Greenway summarized the financial support request from the Stewardship Network.

Discussion:

- Support this program
- Would like to see more funds stay locally
- Enjoy their programs

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER STEPHENS SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD APPROVE THE EXPENDITURE OF UP TO \$5,000.00 OF MAINTENANCE FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUPPORTING THE STEWARDSHIP NETWORK. \$3,500 OF THE TOTAL SHOULD BE

ALLOCATED TO THE MID-MICHIGAN CLUSTER OF THE STEWARDSHIP NETWORK.

Roll Call:

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

NAYS: None

The motion passed 8-0

9. Land Management Coordinator Report
  - a. Red Cedar Glen Land Preserve – Site Restoration: trees were planted the week of November 2013; looked great last week; suggest sending Carla Clos a thank you note
  - b. Davis/Foster Land Preserve – Demolition: still waiting on asbestos report; minimal interior demolition began the last week of October 2013; assisted by boy scouts; date of structure demolition will be announced at a later date; Nick Sanchez and Coordinator Greenway are working on an interpretive sign; Coordinator Greenway will be designing a peaceful outlook as part of the site restoration and the sign will be incorporated into the design.
  - c. Deer Management – As of November 14, 2013, 76 deer have been harvested; 30% of the total have been taken at Lake Lansing North Park and the Township Recycling Center.
  - d. Southwest Meridian Uplands Land Preserve – have received a U. S. Fish and Wildlife grant for \$1,288 for seven-acre restoration project; Meridian Township will pay 41,505; project will begin Spring 2014.
  - e. Northwest Land Preserve – the project is mostly complete; Board Members Smith, Kielbaso and Brixie worked on the site with MSU volunteers; planted over 5 acres with 2,500 seedlings; a 0.1 acre area will be planted with hardwoods in Spring 2014; Nick Sanchez designed an educational sign for the project site; draft sign design distributed at meeting for review; Dave Caszatt will be honored by Township Board at their December 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.
  - f. Mid-Michigan Stewardship Initiative – met on November 7, 2013 at Lake Lansing North park to learn about “Autumn Olive Control”; discussion lead by Nick Sanchez
  - g. Land Preserve Names – at a future meeting would like to discuss name changes for some of the land preserves
  - h. Proposed management activities and opinion of cost – distributed information sheets at meeting; Board members would like to see enough funds to project the preserves in perpetuity, current endowment may not be enough; the Land Preserve Program has exceeded its goals of 600 acres (have 742); now need to move toward management and stewardship.
10. Other  
  
None

11. Public Comment

None

12. Closed Session

BOARD MEMBER STEPHENS MOVED, BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE SECONDED, TO MOVE INTO CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS LAND ACQUISITION.

Roll Call:

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

NAYS: None

The Board entered into closed session at 9:51 pm.

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

Roll Call:

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

NAYS: None

The Board returned to open session at 10:03 pm.

BOARD MEMBER STEPHENS MOVED, BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE SECONDED, FOR STAFF TO TAKE SUCH AS ACTION AS DISCUSSED DURING CLOSED SESSION. Voice vote. Motion passed.

13. Adjournment

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER RUSCH SECONDED, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The meeting adjourned at 10:04 pm.