

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PARK COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2016

PRESENT: Commissioners Deschaine, Jaramillo, McDonald, Stephens

STAFF: Parks and Recreation Director LuAnn Maisner, Parks and Land Management Coordinator Jane Greenway; Administrative Assistant II Robin Faust

1. Call Meeting to Order

Acting Chair McDonald called the regular meeting to order at 7:05 pm

2. Approval of Agenda

- Under item #3, Presentations, removed item #a, Certificate of Appreciation for Todd Wilson
- Under item #10, Other Business, add item #a, Park Commission November 8th Meeting Date

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS MOVED, COMMISSIONER DESCHAIINE SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

3. Presentations

a. Certificate of Appreciation – Todd Wilson

Item was postponed from the agenda.

b. Water Trail Proposal

Director Maisner reported there have been ongoing discussions to construct and promote a water trail from Williamston to Lansing. Jeff Potter is present to share his plan to move the project forward.

Jeff Potter, Out Your Back Door, LLC, stated his group consists of other local river enthusiasts with backgrounds in construction and media/internet access. They believe the river is an under used resource and want to launch a campaign to increase awareness which would involve over a dozen agencies, governments, and entities covering over 23 miles. They are recommending the creations of boat launch sites that would be seen from the roadway. Very much like Ferguson Park (which is in dire need of renovation). His proposal includes proposed sites, launch construction and signage. Their analysis recommends having options that provide for one to two hour trips. They estimate the entire project to cost approximately \$70,000 and would be

asking each community to contribute and will be reaching out to Ingham County Trails Millage to assess their interest but know the County will require letters of commitment from the interested communities. He would like Meridian Township to serve as the fiduciary agency for the entire project.

Discussion:

- Would promote recreation on the water and address water quality issues of the river
- Looking at public/private partnerships such as with Power of Water
- Power of Water does volunteer for water clearing projects
- There will be a common, low impact design for the launch sites
- Working with an interested individual to create a handicap accessible site
- Will need to create a plan where everyone can help keep the river clear and open
- Would be working with volunteers from the new MSU water initiative program

4. Public Comment

Fred Hawley, 4543 Eastwood Drive, Okemos, spoke in support of the deer management program and it is especially needed in the Forest Hills Natural Area, Tacoma Hills Natural Area. Residents have an on-going battle to project their landscaping. He is very concerned with safety with so many deer in yards and the spread of diseases and for traveling in the neighborhoods and along roadways.

Charles Griffen, 1655 Boulevard Drive, Okemos stated the deer are no longer discriminate eaters, they eat everything. During the day, there are up to 5-6 standing in your yard and looking into the windows. He supports all attempts to getting this deer herd in Forest Hills under control.

5. Commissioner Reports and Comments

Commissioner Deschaine reported this will be his last meeting on the Park Commission and it has been a pleasure to serve with the Commissioners. While campaigning, he heard two key issues: too many deer in the Okemos areas and they need to be removed; and the redevelopment of Central Park and moving the Farmers Market to a new, expanded location, both of these issues he supports.

6. Approval of Minutes

a. August 23, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS MOVED, COMMISSIONER JARAMILLO SECONDED TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 23, 2016 MINUTES AS PRESENTED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

7. Communications

Director Maisner summarized the following items of communication:

A. Items to/from the Public

1. From: Eckhart Dersch; RE: Ted Black Woods park observations and recommendations
2. From: Eckhart Dersch; RE: Tacoma Hills Neighborhood Park observations and recommendations
3. From: Peter Cobbett; RE: Meridian Deer Management
4. From: Mary Lou Gifford; RE: Deer problem
5. From: Michael Garrette Sr; RE: Deer herd
6. From: Jessi Wortley; RE: Meridian Deer Management

B. Commission Information

1. Calendar of Events for October and November
2. Harris Nature Center Foundation 2015 Annual Report
3. Press Releases:
 - Red Cedar River Clearing Event rescheduled to October 29
 - Meridian Township Celebrates Halloween on October 22 & October 29
 - Local Business Helps Raise Funds for Meridian Township's 175th Anniversary – Culver's October 12

C. Staff Inquiries/Response

1. To: Meridian Township Residents; RE: information Deer Management Areas to adjacent residents
2. From: Harmony Gmazel, AICP Associate Planner; RE: Wetland Use Permit #16-04 (Ingham County Drain Commissioner)

D. Distributed at Meeting:

1. From: Eckhart Dersch; RE: Eastgate Park observations and recommendations

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS MOVED, COMMISSIONER DESCHAIINE SECONDED, TO ACCEPT AND PLACE THE ITEMS OF COMMUNICATION ON FILE. Voice vote. Motion passed.

8. Director's Report

Director Maisner summarized the following:

- Hillbrook Park – the tennis, pickleball and basketball courts project is nearing completion with poles, nets and stripping being finished; trees have been ordered and will be installed around the courts and play structure within the next two weeks
- Towner Road Park – request for qualification proposals for a construction manager for the project have been sent out and are due Monday, October 17

- Doggie Playground – staff cleared an area, will be removing invasives, fencing three areas, develop pathways and construct agility structures, plan to have installed before the end of the year
- 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan – an updated plan is due to DNR by March 1, requested proposals to assist with the community input and goals and objectives portions of the Plan, four proposals were received, staff interviewed three
- Community Regional Foundation Grant for Tool Crib – staff submitted a \$6,500 grant to create a tool crib which will house tools needs by staff and volunteers at project sites.
- Pet Smart Dog Park Grant – the Township did not receive a grant this year but a grant was awarded to a Michigan city
- Grants Update – staff received preliminary scores for each of the three grants, staff submitted additional information to increase the score:
 - ✓ Land and Water Conservation Fund – Historical Village Restroom and Gateway Bridge: originally received 270/430 with additional material score increase to 340/430
 - ✓ MNR Trust Fund – Regional Pathway Central Park: originally received 355/520 with additional material score increase to 400/520
 - ✓ MNR Trust Fund – Ponderosa Acquisition: originally received 400/550 with additional material score increase to 415/550

9. New Business

PUBLIC COMMENT

a. Hillbrook Drain Easement Request

Ingham County Deputy Drain Commissioner Paul Pratt reported plans have been submitted for approval and staff is working on the legal phrasing for the drain easement agreement. Director Maisner stated the current drain that runs through Hillbrook Park is inadequate and needs repair. They will be maintaining the integrity of the existing trail system by constructing a footbridge. They will also be removing trees that are necessary for the project and replacing them at a 2:1 ratio. Some of those trees will be planted near the new playground area in the northern portion of the park.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS MOVED, COMMISSIONER DESCHAIINE SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE EASEMENT REQUEST IN HILLBROOK PARK FROM THE INGHAM COUNTY DRAIN OFFICE FOR THE PURPOSE OF IMPROVING THE NAMOKA DRAIN. ALL TREES REMOVED BY THE PROJECT WILL BE REPLACED AT A MINIMUM OF A TWO TO ONE RATIO. A BOARDWALK/FOOTBRIDGE WILL BE CONSTRUCTED OVER THE DRAIN AS PART OF THE PROJECT TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF THE EXISTING TRAIL SYSTEM. MOVE TO APPROVE PENDING ATTORNEY REVIEW. Voice vote. Motion passed.

b. 2016 Deer Management Program

Coordinator Greenway reported the Township is in its sixth year of the Deer Management Program covering 20 parks and land preserves. In the last five years, 473 deer have been harvested and there have been 1,355 deer car collisions. Last year, CWD was discovered in Haslett. All harvested and road kill deer have been checked in the core area. Complaints of deer damage have steadily increased especially from residents in Cornell Woods and Forest Hills Natural Area. Staff is asking to include six (6) additional parks and land preserves to the program trying to reach residential areas south of Grand River. To address the concerns by Okemos Schools, hunting in areas adjacent to Okemos Schools will only occur on weekends and during Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks. The proposed locations are: Forest Hills Natural Area, Orlando Park Outlot B, Hartrick Park, Tacoma Hills Natural Area, Wonch Park and Ferguson Park. The Land Preservation Advisory Board will be considering the additional of the Sumbal Land Preserve which is adjacent to Ferguson Park. Residents were notified of the proposed sites.

Discussion:

- There will be two hunters in western end of Hartrick Park
- All stand locations are approved by staff
- Forest Hills will probably have only one hunter
- Our hunters are Township residents and/or employees and usually live adjacent to the area they are hunting in
- Orlando Park Outlot B is not connected to Orlando Park, is adjacent to the Mudd Lake Drain but not easy accessible from Haslett School due to the wetlands and there are no trails in the area. There will be one hunter at this site
- Other areas participating in deer harvest include Delta Dental, Ingham County Farm on Dobie Road, Lake Lansing North and MSU Reserve on Dobie Road.

COMMISSIONER DESCHAIINE MOVED (and read into the record),

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PARK COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN AUTHORIZES THAT THE TOWNSHIP-MANAGED DEER HARVEST WILL ADD THE FOLLOWING PARK PROPERTIES TO THE PROGRAM IN 2016: FOREST HILLS NATURAL AREA, ORLANDO PARK OUTLOT B, HARTRICK PARK, TACOMA HILLS NATURAL AREA, WONCH PARK, AND FERGUSON PARK. ALL PARK PROPERTIES WILL REMAIN OPEN TO THE PUBLIC DURING NORMAL HOURS AS IDENTIFIED IN THE PARK ORDINANCE.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS SECONDED.

Roll Call

AYES: Mark Stephens, Philip Deschaine, Michael McDonald, Melanie Jaramillo

NAYS: None

Resolution passed.

c. International Transmission Company (ITC) Temporary Easement Request

Director Maisner reported ITC is requesting to access their easement to their power lines on the College Fields property that extends to east and west along the northern border of Hartrick Park. their access would be allowed from Hulett road through the park and around behind the ball fields and soccer fields. ITC is offering \$250 for use of the park and the Township Attorney is reviewing the temporary easement.

Discussion:

- Suggested the fee be increased to \$1,000 to be used to benefit the park
- Asked to have the area in the west end of the park reviewed first to see if any area should be environmentally protected as there may be song birds in the area

ACTING CHAIR MCDONALD MOVED, COMMISSIONER DESCHAIINE SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE TEMPORARY ACCESS EASEMENT REQUEST FROM INTERNATIONAL TRANSMISSION COMPANY (ITC) TO ACCESS THEIR POWER POLES FOR MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT THROUGH HARTRICK PARK. ITC MUST AGREE TO REPAIR ANY AND ALL DAMAGE THAT OCCURS TO THE DRIVEWAY, PARKING LOT, AND/OR TURF AREAS AND FOLLOW ALL THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE EASEMENT LANGUAGE. THE TEMPORARY ACCESS EASEMENT EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, 2016. Voice vote. Motion passed.

d. Consumers Energy Tree Grant Award

The Township applied and received a grant in the amount of \$1,000 from Consumers Energy's Community Tree Planting Grant program. The goal of the program is to encourage municipalities to plant the "right tree in the right place". The grant requires trees to be native and to not plant them on top of or underneath utility lines. Staff is proposing to purchase and plant ten native flowering trees in Ferguson Park and the planting will be completed by Chippewa Middle School students.

COMMISSIONER JARAMILLO MOVED, COMMISSIONER STEPHENS SECONDED, TO ACCEPT THE TREE GRANT FROM CONSUMERS ENERGY IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,000 TO PLANT TEN TREES IN FERGUSON PARK WITH A PROJECT COMPLETION DATE OF NOVEMBER 14, 2016.

Roll Call

AYES: Mark Stephens, Philip Deschaine, Michael McDonald, Melanie Jaramillo

NAYS: None

Motion passed.

e. Ingham County Parks and Trails Millage Application

Director Maisner reported the Commission submitted grant application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for the Central Meridian Regional Trail Connector project which creates a trail head in Central Park and runs west to Central Park South connecting to an existing north/south paved pathway. Staff is recommending the Commission submit a grant to the Ingham County Parks and Trail Millage for 50% of the local match to the Trust Fund Grant.

COMMISSIONER DESCHAIINE MOVED, COMMISSIONER JARAMILLO SECONDED, TO SUBMIT A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE INGHAM COUNTY PARKS AND TRAILS MILLAGE FOR A REQUEST OF \$61,225 TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP'S LOCAL MATCH OF THE MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND GRANT FOR THE CENTRAL MERIDIAN REGIONAL TRAIL CONNECTOR PROJECT.

Roll Call

AYES: Mark Stephens, Philip Deschaine, Michael McDonald, Melanie Jaramillo

NAYS: None

Motion passed.

f. Harris Nature Center Building Improvements

Director Maisner stated there is an ongoing water problem in the basement of the Harris Nature Center building and it needs corrective action immediately. Bids have been received to build a new drainage system in the foundation for \$13,110.

With this work in the basement, Staff is also recommending that a new building generator be installed to prevent power outages especially since there are a number of animals that could be in danger in extreme weather conditions. The estimated cost is \$13,000, but bids will be sought before the work is completed.

ACTING CHAIR MCDONALD MOVED, COMMISSIONER JARAMILLO SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE BID FROM STAY DRY BASEMENT WATERPROOFING, INC IN THE AMOUNT OF \$13, 110 FOR INSTALLATION OF A COMPLETE HYDO-FLO DRAINAGE SYSTEM AND MOLD TREATMENT AT THE HARRIS NATURE CENTER.

Roll Call

AYES: Melanie Jaramillo, Michael McDonald, Philip Deschaine, Mark Stephens

NAYS: None

Motion passed.

ACTING CHAIR MCDONALD MOVED, COMMISSIONER JARAMILLO SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE INSTALLATION OF A BUILDING GENERATOR AT THE HARRIS NATURE CENTER TO SERVE AS A BACK-UP POWER SOURCE DURING POWER-OUTAGE EVENTS IN THE ESTIMATED AMOUNT OF \$13, 000.

Roll Call

AYES: Mark Stephens, Philip Deschaine, Michael McDonald, Melanie Jaramillo

NAYS: None

Motion passed.

- g. Professional Services Agreement- 5-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update

Director Maisner stated the Department is in the processing of updating its 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan and are seeking consulting services to assist with implementing community input, development of goals and objectives and implementation of the planning process. The Master Plan must be submitted to the Department of Natural Resources by March 1, 2017. The Township received four bids and interviewed three firms and is recommending awarding the contract to Rowe Professional Services Co.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS MOVED, COMMISSIONER DESCHAIINE SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH ROWE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CO IN THE AMOUNT OF \$8,900 FOR UPDATING THE FIVE-YEAR PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN 2017-2021 PENDING TOWNSHIP ATTORNEY REVIEW AS TO FORM.

Roll Call

AYES: Melanie Jaramillo, Michael McDonald, Philip Deschaine, Mark Stephens

NAYS: None

Motion passed.

10. Other Business (cherry)

PUBLIC COMMENT

a. Park Commission November 8th Meeting Date

Acting Chair McDonald reported due to the general election, the Commission will be canceling their November 8th meeting.

COMMISSIONER DESCHAIINE MOVED, COMMISSIONER STEPHENS SECONDED, TO CANCEL THE NOVEMBER 8TH PARK COMMISSION MEETING DATE DUE TO THE GENERAL ELECTION. THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE IS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2016. Voice vote. Motion passed.

It was the consensus of the Commission will be holding a special meeting on Wednesday, October 26, 2016 at 6 pm, at the Meridian Service Center to discuss the 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This will be a kick-off meeting and the incoming Park Commissioners will also be invited to participate.

11. Discussion Items

PUBLIC COMMENT

a. Red Cedar Water Trail Proposal

Discussion:

- How will this all be connected
- Maintenance is a major issue
- Need to know what other communities are involved and potential commitment
- Not sure Williamston or Williamstown will commit financially
- Need more details before reaching out to residents and businesses
- Suggest hosting a series of focus groups, present the idea and see what the interest is
- Will need to address beavers, trapping, erosion problems, bank stabilization
- Excited about the proposal but need to build consensus and support
- Large undertaking
- Would like to hear from Williamston, East Lansing and MSU
- MSU is focusing on water this year
- Would be good if the MSU canoe rental and launch were revived.
- Need to know how the project will be coordinated; like to see a more complete project package
- Commissioners will send Director Maisner their thoughts and the topic will be on a future agenda

12. Final Comments

Commissioner Jaramillo expressed her appreciation to Commissioners and residents and enjoyed serving as a Park Commissioner. A lot of good work has been accomplished in the last four years.

Commissioner Deschaine stated it has been a great two years and glad to see the new Park Millage put to good use.

13. Announcements

- a. Farmers' Market –Wednesdays and Saturdays, 8 am-2 pm, until end of October; Thanksgiving Market will be held on Wednesday, November 23 from 10 am – 2 pm
- b. Red Cedar River Clearing Event has been rescheduled to Saturday, October 29, 9 am, meeting at the Harris Nature Center
- c. Culver's hosting 175th Anniversary Fundraiser, Wednesday, October 12; a portion of sales received between 4-10 pm to support community celebration
- d. Meridian Township Celebrates Halloween
 - Saturday, October 22nd: Halloween Adventures at the Harris Nature Center from 10 am – 5 pm and Fire Safety Open House at Meridian Central Fire Station from 10 am – 1 pm
 - Saturday, October 29th: HOMTV Studio Funhouse from 10 am – 1 pm; Meridian Police Department Open House from 10 am – 1 pm; Halloween in the Village from 10 am – 2 pm; Meridian Farmers' Market from 8 am – 2 pm (last market day of the summer/fall season)

14. Public Comment

None

15. Closed Session

COMMISSIONER JARAMILLO MOVED, COMMISSIONER STEPHENS SECONDED, TO MOVED INTO CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS LAND ACQUISITION ISSUES.

Roll Call

AYES: Melanie Jaramillo, Michael McDonald, Philip Deschaine, Mark Stephens

NAYS: None

The Commission entered into closed session at 9:11 pm.

COMMISSIONER DESCHAIINE MOVED, ACTING CHAIR MCDONALD SECONDED, TO MOVED TO RETURN TO OPEN SESSION.

Roll Call

AYES: Melanie Jaramillo, Michael McDonald, Philip Deschaine, Mark
Stephens

NAYS: None

The Commission returned to session at 9:26 pm.

16. Adjournment

Hearing no objections, Acting Chair McDonald adjourned the regular meeting at 9:27 pm.