

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PARK COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 12, 2014

PRESENT: Commissioners: Banas, Jaramillo, McDonald, Stephens, Wilson (left at 9 pm)
Staff: Parks and Recreation Director LuAnn Maisner; Parks and Land Management Coordinator Jane Greenway; Assistant Park Naturalist Nick Sanchez; Parks and Recreation Administrative Assistant II Robin Faust

ABSENT: None

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chair Wilson called the regular meeting to order at 7:01 pm and welcomed new Park Commissioner Mike McDonald.

2. Approval of Agenda

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS MOVED, COMMISSIONER JARAMILLO SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA. Voice vote. Motion passed.

3. Presentations

a. Resolution of Appreciation – Scot Stillman

Director Maisner introduced retiring Parks and Grounds Maintenance Lead Worker Scot Stillman. She stated Scot has been with the Township for over 35 years; with the Parks and Grounds Maintenance Division since 1980 and was promoted to Lead Worker in 2002; with four crew members, he supervised maintenance in over 900 acres of parkland and 800 acres of land preserves including special events and recreation activities all on a time-sensitive schedule; he is a “jack of all trades”; his leadership qualities will be missed and thanked him for his dedicated service to the Township.

The following resolution was offered by Commissioner Banas and supported by Commissioner Stephens

WHEREAS, Scot Stillman has served the Charter Township of Meridian for thirty-five (35) years; from 1979 through 2014, as one of three generations of Stillmans who have served the Township; and

WHEREAS, Scot Stillman began on May 21, 1979 as a temporary seasonal laborer in the Parks and Grounds Maintenance Division at the Physical Plant (former battery building) in Wonch Park and then at the Meridian Public Works Building at 2116 Haslett Road, earning \$3.75 per hour, and eventually working at the Meridian Service Center from 1988 through 2014; and

WHEREAS, Scot Stillman was hired full-time in 1980 in the Water Department and was promoted to crew chief in 1985; and

WHEREAS, Scot Stillman joined the Parks and Grounds Division in 1990 and has served as Lead Worker since 2002; and

WHEREAS, Scot Stillman's work ethic and leadership has played a vital role in maintaining the beauty and functionality of Meridian Township's parks and grounds for twenty-four (24) years; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, Scot Stillman received state-wide recognition from the Michigan Recreation and Park Association by winning the "Maintenance Leadership Award" for his dedication and leadership in park maintenance; and

WHEREAS, The Park Commission is very appreciative of the effort, dedication and commitment to excellence that Scot Stillman has demonstrated over his career in serving the residents of Meridian Township; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE PARK COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN extends its best wishes to Scot Stillman and expresses its gratitude for his service to the community.

ADOPTED:

YEAS: Teri Banas, Melanie Jaramillo, Michael McDonald, Mark Stephens, Todd Wilson

NAYS: None

Scot Stillman thanked the Commission for their resolution of appreciation and stated while working for the Township for the last 35 years, he received a lot of support. Without his co-workers, he would not have gotten the work done and they made his job a lot easier to do and that includes all the park-time crew members. He appreciates all that the Park Commission and Township Board have done for him, his crew and the residents.

4. Public Comment

None

5. Commissioner Reports and Comments

Commissioner Banas stated she appreciated that passage of the Park Millage Ballot proposal. She appreciated the voter turnout and supporting vote for the Park Millage. She thanked Scot Stillman for the great job he did for the Township. She also thank the over 90 financial supporters of the "Yes for Meridian Parks" campaign.

Commissioner Stephens thanked everyone for voting in favor of the Millage. The increased funding from this proposal will make the community better.

Commissioner McDonald thanked the businesses for allowing the Vote for Park Millage signage in front of their businesses.

Commissioner Jaramillo thanked HOMTV for their coverage of the August ballot items and the round table discussion. She also extended thanks for the promotional parties and articles of support in the Towne Courier.

Chair Wilson thanked the voters for turning out and voting in support of the Millage proposal. Parks provide for the community a refuge from urban life from walking the dog to picnics, to sports activities. The passage of this Millage proposal is a wonderful statement of support for parks and community.

6. **Approval of Minutes**

- a. July 8, 2014 Work Session Meeting Minutes – no changes
- b. July 8, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes – no changes
- c. July 15 Special Meeting – page 2, under Other, change “Commissioner Jaramillo” to “Commissioner Banas”

COMMISSIONER BANAS MOVED, COMMISSIONER JARAMILLO SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE JULY 8, 2014 WORK SESSION AND JULY 8, 2014 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED AND THE JULY 15, 2014 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

7. **Communications**

A. Items to/from the Public

None

B. Commission Information

1. August Calendar of Events for Parks & Recreation
2. Parks & Recreation Department July Report
3. Lansing State Journal: **July 3:** Van Atta Road bridge nears completion
4. Towne Courier: **July 6:** Support Meridian parks at polls/Layne and Sandy Cameron; Van Atta Road bridge nears completion; Guided moonlit walk July 11 set at nature camp; Meet reptiles at nature camps; guided evening walk for people, dogs July 11; **July 13:** Support park millage/John O Grettenberger; Meridian to create paved path along Red Cedar; **July 20:** Vote yes to library, park funding August 5/Bobbi DuByne; Wildlife identification program at HNC; Historical Village offers day camp; Meridian Twp. parks tax on ballot; **July 27:** Natural area protectors honored in Meridian; **August 3:** Woodpecker campfire event on Aug 9; **August 10:** Twp. parks tax wins by a mil

5. Harris Nature Center Foundation: 2013 Annual Report; HNC Foundation Minutes: January 13, 2014; February 10, 2014; March 10, 2014; April 14, 2014; June 9, 2014; July 14, 2014

C. Staff Inquiries/Response

None

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

8. Director's Report

Director Maisner:

- Thanked HOMTV for the coverage of the Park Millage proposal
- Thanked Scot Stillman for his many years of outstanding service to the Township
- Welcomed Robert MacKenzie as the new Leader Worker of the Parks and Ground Maintenance Division team
- Welcomed Administrative Assistant Faust back from surgery leave
- Reported:
 - bids were let for the Legg Park driveway improvement project; Newton Road Park parking lot development project; Wonch Park loop trail development project; plans are to have these projects completed this fall
 - Van Atta Road is open; as part of the bridge project, Ingham County Road Department built a dock on the Harris Nature Center side of the river; funding will be needed to make it a handicap accessible canoe launch
 - with the receipt of \$10,000 in grant funding for the nature exploration area, the Harris Nature Center Foundation bid out Phase I of the project; Brian VanOrder of Michigan Demolition, has donated the work necessary to proceed and the materials will be purchased with the grant funding
 - Harris Nature Center summer camps were very successful even with the road closure
 - Held a ribbon cutting event for the revitalized Claire Twohy Garden and the Eleanor Luecke Memorial; thanked LINC (Liaison for Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation) and the Meridian Garden Club for their support of these two projects.
 - Steve Brunner and others including Brian VanOrder on the Eastgate Park pump track, they continued the improvements they started in the spring
 - Snell-Towar Recreation Center playground program was very successful with over 30 attending each day; each week included a field trip and there was a daily free lunch program available through the Lansing Public School System

9. New Business

PUBLIC COMMENT

a. Wildlife Habitat Grant Submission

Parks and Land Management Coordinator Greenway summarized the following:

- Asked for the Commission's support of Michigan Department of Nature Resources, Wildlife Division, Wildlife Habitat Grant Application for Legg Park
- The Wildlife Habitat Grant Program began in 2013 and is funded with a portion of hunting and fishing licenses that are sold each year. There is one million dollars available.
- The purpose of this grant is to provide funding to local governments and other groups to assist with developing or improving wildlife habitat for game species. The specific program goal of the grant is to manage habitat for sustainable wildlife populations in a changing environment.
- Staff feels this is an ideal source of funding to help develop the wildlife corridors and habitat improvement plans that have been planned for Legg Park. Plans include enhancing "edges" and corridors to facilitate nesting, roosting, and feeding of wildlife in the park. The terms of the grant require the commitment and maintenance of perennial herbaceous plantings to support wildlife.
- This grant will give the Township the opportunity to plant mast-producing species such as oak, establishment of a soft mast (crab apples, etc.) to promote winter food sources, and to provide long term herbaceous cover and forage plantings which restore openings that are degraded due to brush and undesirable herbaceous encroachment.
 - 31 mast producing trees (oak varieties and hickory)
 - 163 soft-mast trees and shrubs (crab, viburnum, dogwood, hawthorn)
 - 56 evergreens (white pine, cedar, jack and red pine)
 - 30 wetland enhancement shrubs (silky dogwood, red osier dogwood, nannyberry)
- Total project cost is \$50,000 and 10% local match is \$5,000
- Grants are awarded on October 1, 2014

Discussion:

- It appears the planting will conceal the fence line while improving wildlife value but how far is it from the fencing (this is a conceptual plan and will get into the detail of it after the grant is approved)
- Want to establish the wildlife corridors in this area and this Trust Fund Grant approves wildlife corridor improvements
- What is the scoring value (think the grant proposal will do well, will receive points for the present corridor want to improve, the deer management program, have the environmental plan from Fishbeck, the site plan is part of an overall master plan for Legg Park, are improving the park entrance, and is a good leverage of local dollars with millage dollars)

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS MOVED, COMMISSIONER MCDONALD SECONDED, TO DEDICATE \$5,000 OF THE PARK MILLAGE FUNDS AS A 10% MATCH FOR AN OVERALL PROJECT COST OF \$50,000 TOWARD A WILDLIFE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROJECT FOR LEGG PARK THAT WILL BE FUNDED BY A WILDLIFE HABITAT GRANT THAT IS FACILITATED BY THE MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES.

Roll Call:

AYES: Michael McDonald, Todd Wilson, Teri Banas, Melanie Jaramillo,
Mark Stephens

NAYS: None

The motion passed.

b. 2014 Deer Management

Assistant Park Naturalist Nick Sanchez reported per the direction of the Township Board, staff has prepared a 2014 Deer Management Plan. Staff will continue to explore options on how to improve and expand the program.

There are no major changes to the structure of the overall management plan. Highlights of the expanded program will include the following items:

- Pursue out of season damage permits from the DNR to extend available harvesting period post archery and firearm seasons.
- Continue to encourage large property owners to participate in the program.
- Continue to work with communications department to improve press releases and township website postings informing the public of managed hunt.
- Offer an alternative method of recording hunter participation and improve communication for efficiency in deer transportation to processor.

Summary of the history of the program:

	Total Hunters	Properties Hunted	Deer Harvested	Deer-Car Collisions
2011	25	7	43	152
2012	50	18	90	153
2013	60	20	127	180

Discussion:

- What are the properties (Meridian Riverfront Park, Red Cedar Natural Area, Central Park, Ted Black Woods and Towner Road Park, the same parks as last year)

- Is the Township looking at other properties (yes, working with owner of the Dobie Road properties and the same ones as last year; also contacting adjacent land owners to see if they want to participate; sending out letters to encourage land owners of over five acres to participate)
- Question why the deer harvested number has increased along with the deer-car collision number, any information on it (no, but an MSU student is studying the five-year cycle of deer placement/displacement in the Township; a resident suggested trapping the deer and then killing them; one area of the State employed snipers to kill off deer in their area)
- Asked to increase communication efforts to alert drivers of high populated deer area and driving strategies to help avoid an accidents (how to drive in areas during dusk time, where high accident areas are, when the deer travel, how deer travel along water areas, where deer are in your own neighborhood, etc.) and for public safety reasons to have this information on website and easy to find
- Suggested contacting insurance companies or driving schools to see if they have educational material on driving strategies that can be used on the website or materials that can be distributed
- Suggested speaking with Oakland County on how they are handling their deer issues.
- Asked to have the following recommendation to the Deer Management Plan:
 - Develop a comprehensive educational campaign using social and earned media along with Township publications and HOMTV to educate drivers on areas of high deer car accidents and provide preventative accident strategies for motorists
- Staff will prepare a public relations education program for review at next meeting

The following resolution was offered by Commissioner McDonald and supported by Commissioner Stephens:

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian has documented numerous complaints relative to the issue of the over-population of white-tailed deer including: over-grazing of landscape plants, a high number of deer/car collisions, threats to public health, and threats to the ecological health of natural areas; and

WHEREAS a Deer Management Plan has been developed for the purpose of outlining measures for conducting a highly managed, safe and humane managed deer harvest on township-owned properties; and

WHEREAS it is recognized that controlled hunting may help control the overpopulation of white-tailed deer; and

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian has authorized staff to conduct a managed deer harvest on township-owned properties that will occur seven days per week during the regular archery season (October 1, 2014 through January 1, 2015); and

WHEREAS the managed deer harvest will utilize qualified, competent, and experienced volunteer hunters; and

WHEREAS the township-owned properties are not open to unauthorized hunting; and

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian will work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to operate under the Deer Management Assistance Program for the purpose of purchasing a large number of antlerless deer permits; and

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian's Deer Management Program will comply with all State of Michigan rules and hunting regulations; and

WHEREAS the public will be properly notified of the deer harvest through posted signs on the designated hunting properties, township website postings, press releases in the local newspaper, and letters to owners of properties adjacent to designated hunting properties ; and

WHEREAS the majority of the venison from the harvested deer will be distributed to the hungry through local food banks; and

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian has constructed an enclosure within Lake Lansing North Park for the purpose of visually observing areas that are open to deer browsing versus areas that are not, which has indicated a significant level of damage due to over-browsing of the natural vegetation; and

WHEREAS parks and natural areas provide ecological and aesthetic beauty, improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve the quality of the air we breathe, provide vegetative buffers to development, and produce habitat for wildlife; and

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian recognizes the benefits derived from parks and natural areas and appreciates benefits of local wildlife

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PARK COMMISSION OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN THAT A TOWNSHIP-MANAGED DEER HARVEST WILL OCCUR ON THE FOLLOWING PROPERTIES IN 2014: MERIDIAN RIVERFRONT PARK; RED CEDAR NATURAL AREA; CENTRAL PARK; TED BLACK WOODS; AND TOWNER ROAD PARK.

ADOPTED:

YEAS: Mark Stephens, Melanie Jaramillo, Todd Wilson, Mike McDonald

NAYS: Teri Banas

Motion passed 4-1

c. 2015-2020 CIP

Director Maisner reported the Park Commission held a special meeting in July to discuss plans for the parks reviewing the proposed Capital Improvements Program projects, information from park surveys and 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan and with the passage of the new Park Millage proposal, there will be \$873,000 available in fund for many of the proposed projects.

Discussion:

- Questioned the amount designated for the Wonch Park Pavilion (the entire amount of the project is used because the Township will not know about the grant result until December and if the grant is received, the cost will be reduced to \$62,500)
- Will the Legg Park amount be reduced if the Wildlife Habitat Grant is received (yes by \$45,000)
- What will happen to these amounts (unspent funds will remain in the Park Millage Fund Balance)
- What are we approving (During the July meeting, the Commission approved the projects for 2015 if the Millage proposal passed; since the proposal has passed, the Commission may want to meet to identify the needs for the parks, review information and reprioritize the proposed projects for 2016-2020 at a later meeting)
- Suggested sending out a press release on the 2015 park development projects

COMMISSIONER JARAMILLO MOVED, COMISSIONER BANAS SECONDED, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2015- 2020 CIP WITH THE FOLLOWING CAPITAL PROJECTS SCHEDULED FOR THE 2015 BUDGET YEAR:

2015 CIP Projects

• Wonch Park Pavilion (Grant)	\$250,000
• Wonch Parking Lot	\$100,000
• Orlando Park Play Equipment	\$ 35,000
• Legg Park Parking, Dog Park, Stewardship	\$170,000
• Hillbrook Park Accessible Playground	\$ 90,000
• Towner Road Park Phase I	\$224,000
• Dugout structures at Hartrick Park	<u>\$ 4,000</u>
	\$873,000

Roll Call

AYES: Mike McDonald, Todd Wilson, Teri Banas, Melanie Jaramillo, Mark Stephens

NAYS: None

Motion passed.

d. 2015 Proposed Budget Request

Director Maisner summarized the proposed 2015 budget request for the Parks in the General Fund and Park Millage as follows:

- Under the General Fund Budget, the Township will continue to support maintenance in the pre-1984 parks but future development projects in pre-1984 parks will be funded through the Park Millage
- Under the Park Millage Budget, the park development amount includes the proposed 2015 Capital Improvements Program projects and the addition of one utility worker was included in the Park Maintenance amount

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS MOVED, CHAIR WILSON SECONDED, TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2015 BUDGET REQUEST FOR PARKS IN THE GENERAL FUND AND PARK MILLAGE IN THE FOLLOWING AMOUNTS:

General Fund:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| • Parks and Recreation Administration | \$146,139 | |
| • Park Maintenance | <u>\$204,972</u> | \$351,111 |

Park Millage:

- | | | |
|---|------------------|-------------|
| • Parks and Recreation Administration | \$154,675 | |
| • Park Maintenance (add 1 utility worker) | \$233,891 | |
| • Harris Nature Center | \$188,632 | |
| • Park Development | <u>\$899,000</u> | \$1,476,198 |

Roll Call:

AYES: Mark Stephens, Melanie Jaramillo, Teri Banas, Todd Wilson, Mike McDonald

NAYS: None

Motion passed

10. Unfinished Business

PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. None

11. Other Business

PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. None

12. Discussion Items

PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. None

13. Final Comments

None

14. Announcements

- a. Next Regular Meeting Date: Tuesday, September 9, 2014 Town Hall
b. Farmers' Market – Wednesdays and Saturdays; 8 am - 2 pm; Central Park

15. Public Remarks

None

16. Closed Session

None

17. Adjournment

COMMISSIONER BANAS, CHAIR WILSON SECONDED, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 pm.