



CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PARK COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Location: Service Center Building
Okemos, MI 48864

DATE: September 10, 2019

PRESENT: Amanda Lick, Michael McDonald, Annika Schaeztl, Mark Stephens, Ami VanAntwerp

EXCUSED: None

STAFF: LuAnn Maisner, Director of Parks and Recreation

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair McDonald called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

2. PRESENTATIONS:

A. Introduction of new Park Naturalist, Allison Goodman

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Stephens moved TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. Seconded by Commissioner Lick.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

A. George Kass, 4512 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, spoke about the National Night Out event held by the Indian Hills Homeowners Association and the need for a playground structure on the open space. After a brief discussion, Mr. Kass was asked to take this request back to the Indian Hills Homeowners Association for further research and possible Resolution of Support for this request

B. Fred Hawley, 4543 Eastwood Drive, Okemos, spoke in support of the Deer Management Program and asked to see more done to decrease the deer population.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. July 9, 2019 Regular Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Stephens moved TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JULY 9, 2019 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN. Seconded by Commissioner VanAntwerp.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Items to/from the Public
None

B. Commission Information

1. Helen K Tanner Obituary
2. Harris Nature Center Foundation Minutes
 - a. March 11, 2019
 - b. April 8, 2019
 - c. May 13, 2019
 - d. June 10, 2019
 - e. August 12, 2019
3. Press Releases:
 - a. Howl at the Moons – Guided Evening Walk for People and Dogs
 - b. Strings and Wood Playing Outdoors Venue – Music in Nature Series Final Performance at Harris Nature Center
 - c. Preschoolers Discover Nature – Preschool Science Exploration Class Investigates Nocturnal Nature
 - d. Harris Nature Center Encourages Stewardship – Volunteer Opportunities Connect People with Parks
 - e. Harvest Moon Stories around the Campfire – Lansing Storytellers Providing Entertainment at Campfire Program
 - f. Toddlers and Preschoolers can Discover Nature at the Harris Nature Center – Nature Tots Registration Begins
 - g. Chipmunk Story Time at Harris Nature Center – Chicory Chipmunk presents “Possum’s Harvest Moon”
- C. Staff Inquiries/Response
None

Commissioner Stephens moved TO ACCEPT AND PLACE THE ITEMS OF COMMUNICATION ON FILE. Seconded by Commissioner Schaetzl.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. DIRECTOR’S REPORT

- A. Project updates
 1. Marketplace on the Green – Contract awarded to Gordon Construction Services in July. Currently working with their engineer to finalize design of pavilion. Site work to begin at the end of September.
 2. Central Park Projects –are currently out to bid. Proposals due September 17, 2019.
 3. Meridian Senior Center – patio furniture and paved loop trail project nearly completed
 4. HNC Pavilion and Restroom – Will go to bid later this month as we are waiting for DNR approval with the plans. The HNC Foundation was awarded a \$25,000 grant to construct a bird overlook platform that we are working on currently as well.
 5. Large Dog Park – contracting now for grading and seeding.
 6. Hartrick Park Soccer Field Renovation – topdressing and over seeding utilizing topsoil from Okemos High School Football Field renovation.
 7. Youth sports programs going on now include Soccer- 654; Flag Football -241
 8. Summer Camp Participation – 440 children

B. STAFF NEWS

1. Kit Rich retired a Sr. Park Naturalist after 25 years of service at the Harris Nature Center on August 23, 2019
2. Dennis Antone, Facility Superintendent resigned effective August 30 to become the Director of Public Works in Eaton Rapids.
3. Darcie Weigand, Parks and Recreation Specialist resigned effective September 18, 2019 and is moving to Virginia with her family.
4. Kelsey Dillon got engaged to boyfriend David Dietz over Labor Day Weekend
5. New Farmer's Market Manager – Tom Carey
6. Kati Adams was named the new coordinator for the Harris Nature Center.
7. We welcome Allison Goodman as our new full-time Park Naturalist.
8. Open Positions:
 - A. Parks and Recreation Specialist to replace Darcie
 - B. Assistant Park Naturalists – HNC
 - C. Recreation Intern
 - D. Senior Fitness Program Leader
 - E. Parks and Land Preservation Supervisor
9. Incident at Harris Nature Center. Will be looking into installing security cameras in the future.

8. ACTION ITEMS

None

9. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. 2019 Deer Management Program

Meridian Township's ninth year of deer management will officially commence on October 1, 2019 and will run until January 1, 2020. This popular program places volunteer archery hunters on select Township and County owned properties to manage the deer population. Meridian Township has an over-population of deer that has resulted in an increase of damage to landscaping, reports of vehicle/deer accidents, concern for public health, and a disruption to the ecological balance of our natural areas. In response, the Meridian Township Board directed staff to develop and implement a deer management plan that outlines measures for a highly managed program to harvest white-tailed deer in a number of selected township-owned properties.

The program began in 2011 and has been conducted each year since that time. The harvest is held during the regular archery season, October 1st through January 1st. The managed harvest is NOT open to the general public. All hunters must be approved by the Township and are tested for proficiency at the MSU Demmer Archery Center. Only approved, qualified, competent and experienced hunters will be considered to access Township property for the managed harvest. Neighboring property owners are notified of the harvest each year. All parks and land preserves remain open to the public during archery season. The hunters have proven to be valuable partners and act as the eyes and ears on Township-owned properties. The program continues to receive accolades statewide and serves as a model for suburban wildlife management. The intention is to continue the volunteer archery deer management program in 2019 at 39 sites in the Township with the hope that our volunteer's efforts will continue to reduce the herd and provide valuable data on Chronic

Wasting Disease to the Michigan DNR. In 2018, the management harvest was held on 38 sites and harvested 57 deer. There was 129 deer/vehicle collisions in 2018.

The Parks and Recreation office regularly fields calls from residents complaining about deer damage to personal property. Our environmental consultants and staff continue to report severe ecological damage to the natural areas due to over-browsing. The onset of CWD has also raised concerns about the health of the deer herd in Meridian Township. While not its original intention, the deer management program now plays a vital role in providing the Michigan DNR and MSU with valuable data on the disease. Although, this now means one of the goals of the program to donate all harvested venison is not a possibility at this time. We will keep encouraging hunters to privately donate the venison they harvest and as soon as the CWD restrictions are lifted, we hope to resume all donations to Sportsman Against Hunger.

B. Climate Sustainability Program

Director Maisner shared the plan with the Commissioners and asked them to review it and make recommendations in the future on methods to support the plan's goals.

10. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

11. OTHER MATTERS AND COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

NONE

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair McDonald adjourned the meeting at 8:25 pm.

13. NEXT MEETING: The next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, October 8, 2019**, in the Service Center Building; 2100 Gaylord C. Smith Court, Haslett, MI, with the non-televised regular meeting at 6:30 pm.