

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PARK COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2017

PRESENT: Commissioners Lick, McDonald, Schaetzl, Stephens

EXCUSED: Commissioner Baker

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

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chair McDonald called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

2. Approval of Agenda

Addition of #3b Final Eagle Scout Project Presentation of the Harris Nature Center Recycling Area by Eagle Scout Candidate Robert McQuaid.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS MOVED, COMMISSIONER LICK SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE AGENDAS AS AMENDED Voice vote. Motion passed.

3. Presentations

a. Vernal Pool Mapping

Director Maisner introduced Conservation Scientist Yu Man Lee on the Vernal Pool Mapping Project in the Township.

Michigan Natural Features Inventory, MSU Extension Board representative and Land Preservation Advisory Board Member Yu Man Lee, Conservation Scientist, presented the proposal for the Vernal Pool Project (presentation included in the meeting packet) in Township Parks and Land Preserves. The purpose of the project is to identify vernal pools in township parks and land preserves and provide training, support, and assistance to Meridian Township to initiate a citizen science- and community-based vernal pool monitoring program in the Township. The information obtained will be gathered and compiled by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory.

Commissioner Stephens shared that the Land Preservation Advisory Board has committed support toward this effort in the amount of \$2,500.

b. Eagle Scout Project – Robert McQuaid Final Report

Eagle Scout Candidate Robert McQuaid offered his final report for his project of constructing a fenced-in area for seed storage and trash bin at the Harris Nature Center. The concrete and materials were donated by local businesses and resulted in 128.5 volunteer hours of labor.

Discussion

- Worked with Kati Adams and Dennis Antone on the project idea and enjoys visiting the Center
- Concrete was donated by local business owner
- Will be fixing the latch to avoid getting caught inside the structure
- Learned a lot of leadership qualities and other skills being in the scouts

The Commissioners commended Robert on a job well done and an excellent presentation of his project.

4. Public Comment

None

5. Public Hearing

a. 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2017-2021

1. Chair declared the public hearing open at 7:29 pm
2. Director Maisner provided an overview of the plan's purpose and process. Rowe Professional Services was retained to assist the Township with the public input portion of the plan. The remainder of the plan was completed by Parks and Recreation Department staff.
3. Doug Shultz with Rowe Professional Services provided the following summary:
 - Parks and Recreation Staff have greatly expanded upon the minimum requirements outlined by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
 - This serves as a valuable tool for future decision making and allocation of resources
 - Provides and opportunity to engage residents in the planning process
 - The narrative at the beginning of the plan acknowledges the accomplishments since the last plan which provides a good basis for moving forward.
 - General content set by DNR include public input, developing goals, objects and action statements, etc.

- Public input process two methods but this plan included resident mailing, survey, open house, input from youths and farmers market vendors, staff and commissioner input
- Top parks visited primarily Central Park including Nancy Moore Park, Historical Village and Central Park South and Harris Nature Center
- Residents indicated their primary information comes from the Family Fun Guide
- 84% feel comfortable and welcome at township events
- Guiding principles: accessible opportunities; efficient with resources; seek appropriate acquisition, and appropriate use of natural features
- Due to staff's extensive work, this plan is a high quality document balancing the conservation of open land and recreational facilities

Director Maisner shared that most of the top amenities from the previous plan were still at the top of the list today: restrooms, river access and clear navigation; new Farmers Market location; paved trails/signage; Ice rink and dog park. The new Park Millage that passed in 2015 has provided greater local matches and grant opportunities. Residents in the Haslett portion of our community have been waiting patiently for development of Towner Road Park, and that will come to fruition in 2017.

Additional insights from public input

- Residents in Meridian Township appreciate and value our environment and natural resources and support stewardship activities. Over 700 acres of our 911-acre park system are in their natural state and the Land Preservation program has nearly 800-acres in their program. There seems to be strong evidence that the Park Commission, Land Preservation Advisory Board and the Environmental Commission should work more closely and in harmony for the betterment of environmental management of township lands.
- As we look toward trends, placemaking, and engaging the millennial generation, we need to introduce technology into some of our parks. This may include WIFI access and picnic tables with charging stations to host study groups, committee and board meetings etc. Visitors will be able to plug in their laptops transitioning from working and meeting at Starbucks to moving these activities outdoors in our parks!
- Water access – We need to continue our efforts with developing a water trail along the Red Cedar River. There is strong interest in increasing recreational use of one of our greatest water features.
- Let's do more to making our parks more engaging, unique, and different. That type of diversity will only enhance what we currently have.

4. Staff acknowledged items of communications received during the 30-day public review period:

a) Lynn Ochberg

- Have more winter activities in Meridian Township, celebrating the cold weather, being winter friendly and fun
 - ✓ Festivals, sports, art installations, etc.
 - ✓ Advertise things to do in Meridian Township during the winter

b) Eric Ederer

- Create a winter ice rink
- Place heaters and fire pits near recreation areas in the parks
- Hold more small-scale winter events and advertise them to the public
- Create a community garden where people can rent plots
- Have more lights in the parks to encourage people to use the trails in the winter
- Build heated sidewalks

c) Donna Rose

- Bring outdoor experiences to the blind and visually impaired
- Creation of a Braille Trail and include scents like lavender

5. Public comment

Michael Onsworth, 5948 Village Drive, Haslett, member of Friends of Meridian Pathways and Chair of Tri-County Bicycle Advocacy Group supports unisex restrooms, pathway connectivity of parks and with county neighbors; dovetails with the Ingham County Pathway Plan; Township is receiving funding from the County Trail Millage for trail improvements including bridge over grand river; support the staff's monitoring and removal of invasive species and working with the Drain Commissioner's office; supports opportunities for exercise.

6. Commissioners comment

- City of East Lansing is trying heated mats in front of the Hannah Center and questioned if this could be tried in the Township
- At recent MParks (Michigan Recreation and Park Association) conference encourage doctors are writing prescriptions to parks and recommending exercise as a valid treatment course.
- Residents allocated funds for parks and this document shows what the community wants in their parks
- MParks class spoke about rehabilitation services in the parks and working with companies such as McLaren; suggest researching funding opportunities to have fitness equipment such as in Wonch Park in more locations
- Support for ongoing public engagement to create a park system and community that people want to visit and interact with; want to create memories in the parks

7. Chair declared the public hearing closed at 8:04 pm

6. Commissioner Reports and Comments

Commissioner Stephens stated to stay off the ice and the scheduled ice fishing derby in February has been canceled.

7. Approval of Minutes

- a. January 24, 2017 Work Session Meeting Minutes
- b. January 24, 2017 Regular Session Meeting Minutes

COMMISSIONER LICK MOVED, COMMISSIONER SCHAETZL SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 24, 2017 MEETING MINUTES AS Voice vote. Motion passed.

8. Communications

A. Items to/from the Public

- 1. From: Deborah Guthrie, 175th Anniversary Committee Chair, Invitation to Celebrate Enactment Day on February 16, 2017, Michigan State Capitol Building, Room 402/403, from 1:30-2:30 pm

B. Commission Information

None

C. Staff Inquiries/Response

None

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

9. Director's Report

Director Maisner distributed and summarized highlights from the 27 pages of the Parks and Recreation Department's portion of the 2016 Township's Annual Report. The Chinese New Year event this past weekend was well attended.

10. New Business

- a. Vernal Pool Mapping of Township Parks

COMMISSIONER LICK MOVED, COMMISSIONER STEPHENS SECONDED, TO APPROVE A BUDGET ALLOCATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$500 TO MICHIGAN NATURAL FEATURES INVENTORY (MNFI) FOR THE PURPOSE OF CREATING MAPS THAT SHOW VERNAL POOLS IN THE MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP PARK SYSTEM.

Roll Call

AYES: Amanda Lick, Michael McDonald, Mark Stephens, Annika Schaetzl

NAYS: None

The motion passed.

b. 5-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2017-2021

The following resolution was offered by Commissioner Stephens and supported by Commissioner Schaetzl.

WHEREAS, the Meridian Township Park Commission has undertaken a Five-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan update which describes the physical features, existing parks and recreation facilities and the desired actions to be taken to improve and maintain parks and recreation facilities during the period between 2017 to 2021, and

WHEREAS, the Meridian Township Park Commission began the process of developing a community recreation and natural resource conservation plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and made available to local communities, and

WHEREAS, residents of Meridian Township were provided with a well-advertised opportunity during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the recreation and natural resource plan, and

WHEREAS, the community was given a well-advertised opportunity to review the final draft plan for at least 30 days, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held on Tuesday, February 14, 2017 at the Meridian Township Hall, to provide an opportunity for citizens to express opinions, ask questions and discuss all aspects of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and

WHEREAS, This 5-Year Parks and Recreation Master Plan describes the park and recreation opportunities in Meridian Township and establishes goals, objectives and an overall vision for our community's parks and recreation future. It is intended to be a planning tool and guide for future decision making and application of resources.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE PARK COMMISSION OF MERIDIAN CHARTER TOWNSHIP HEREBY RECOMMENDS ADOPTION OF THE MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN 2017-2021 AS A GUIDELINE FOR IMPROVING PARKS AND

RECREATION FACILITIES AND SERVICES FOR THE RESIDENTS OF
MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP.

Roll Call:

AYES: Annika Schaetzl, Mark Stephens, Michael McDonald, Amanda Lick
NAYS: None

The motion/resolution passed unanimously.

c. Towner Road Park Construction Contract

Director Maisner offered a brief history on the proposed development of Towner Road Park Project. The construction bids were lower than expected. Once awarded, construction on this long-awaited project will begin in April with an anticipated completion date of November 1, 2017.

January 9, 2017: A pre-bid meeting was held at Towner Road Park. Over 30 contractors and sub-contractors attended the meeting.

January 30, 2017: Five contractors submitted qualified bids:

1. Laux Construction \$1,714,426.00
2. Woodhull Construction \$1,868,000.00
3. Moore Trospen \$1,930,300.00
4. Central Excavating \$1,972,820.00
5. ET Mackenzie Co. \$1,997,300.00

Our consultant, VIRIDIS Design Group has evaluated the proposals and conducted a post bid interview with the low bidder, Laux Construction. In addition, the consultant reviewed the bid alternates and feel that the alternate prices are reasonable should the Township wish to incorporate the alternate items. Our recommendation is to include Alternate #1 in the bid recommendation but to postpone the construction of Alternate #2 at this time.

ALTERNATE #1 – Pickleball Courts and Adjacent Concrete Pathways
\$107,300

ALTERNATE #2 – Parking Lot B (westernmost parking lot)
\$218,900

Originally budgeted \$2 million for the project and this bid is under budget.

COMMISSIONER STEPHENS MOVED COMMISSIONER LICK
SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE BID FROM LAUX CONSTRUCTION IN
THE AMOUNT OF \$1,714,426.00 FOR THE PURPOSE OF
CONSTRUCTING TOWNER ROAD PARK, WHICH INCLUDES SOCCER
FIELDS, BALL DIAMONDS, PARKING, A RESTROOM BUILDING,

PAVILION, LOOPED PATHWAY, SIDEWALKS, UTILITIES, DRINKING FOUNTAIN, AND LANDSCAPING; AND TO APPROVE BID ALTERNATE #1 IN THE AMOUNT OF \$107,300.00 FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSTRUCTING PICKLEBALL COURTS, AND TO UTILIZE PARK MILLAGE FUNDS FOR THE TOTAL PROJECT COST IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,821,726.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Annika Schaetzl, Mark Stephens, Michael McDonald, Amanda Lick
NAYS: None

The motion/resolution passed.

d. Set Public Hearing for 2017 Grant Submissions

CHAIR MCDONALD MOVED, COMMISSIONER SCHAETZL SECONDED, TO SET A PUBLIC HEARING ON MARCH 14, 2017 AT 8 PM FOR THE 2017 PROPOSED GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR A PAVILION AND OUTDOOR RESTROOM AT THE HARRIS NATURE CENTER.

Discussion:

Director Maisner summarized the two proposed 2017 GRANT APPLICATION projects:

1. Harris Nature Center – Pavilion

This project proposes to construct a pavilion near the Harris Nature Center building in Meridian Riverfront Park. The pavilion may include an upper level that will provide opportunity for wildlife observation and star gazing. A pavilion will serve as a vital amenity along the recently established Red Cedar Water Trail

2. Harris Nature Center – Outdoor Restroom

The Harris Nature Center staff have been requesting an outdoor restroom for many years to accommodate the large number of visitors. Park restrooms are also identified and supported in our Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Voice vote. Motion passed.

11. Other Business

None

12. Discussion Items

None

13. Final Comments

None

14. Announcements

- a. Park Commission Next Meeting – Tuesday, March 14, 2017
 - Friend of the Park Volunteer Recognition Ceremony
 - Public Hearing for Grant Submissions
- b. Farmers' Market – 1st and 3rd Saturdays, 10 am-2 pm, JC Penny corridor
- c. Thursday, February 16:
 - 175th Anniversary Birthday Celebration of Meridian Township and Delhi Township, Michigan State Capitol Building, Rooms 402/403; 1:30-2:30 pm
- d. Saturday, February 18:
 - Farmers Market, 10am-2pm, inside the Meridian Mall
 - Moonlight Ski and Shoe, 6-9 pm, at HNC, weather dependent
 - Moonlight Sledding, 6-8:30 pm, at North Meridian Road Park, weather dependent
 - Meridian Ice Fishing Derby - canceled

15. Public Comment

None

16. Closed Session

None

17. Adjournment

Hearing no objections, Chair McDonald adjourned the regular meeting at 8:29 pm