

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PARK COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JULY 8, 2014

PRESENT: Commissioners: Banas, Jaramillo, Stephens, Wilson
Staff: Parks and Recreation Director LuAnn Maisner; Parks and
Recreation Administrative Assistant II Robin Faust

ABSENT: None

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chair Wilson called the regular meeting to order at 7:15 pm.

2. Approval of Agenda

Under item #10, Other Business, add #a. Set Special Meeting date to discuss the proposed 2015 Budget and CIP projects.

Move item #4 up on the agenda to become item #3.

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

3. Public Comment

Gail Deschaine, 1383 Silverwood Drive, Okemos, spoke in support of the Park Millage and stated a community is only as vibrant and desirable as its public spaces. She and her family love the parks with its many trails, picnic areas and facilities. Parks are a place for the community to meet and enjoy nature and serves as an asset to our community that needs to be maintained. She encouraged everyone to continue this investment in our community.

4. Presentations

- **Eagle Scout Project Final Report – Legg Park Footbridge Reinforcement**
Eagle Scout Candidate Thomas Laub distributed and summarized how he completed his project to reset one of the bridges in Legg Park including a new support system to allow water to flow over and/or under the bridge during high water. He installed five (5) U-channels; two more than was on the bridge before. He also squared up the ends of the bridge and filled in the gaps for easier entry onto the bridge. Commissioners congratulated Thomas on his project. When asked about project funding, Candidate Laub reported the concrete was donated by Schlegel Concrete, U-channels were donated by park neighbor Frank Hatfield and the remaining costs were covered by fundraising and/or donations.

- **Harris Nature Center (HNC) Nature Exploration Area**
HNC Coordinator Rich offered the following update:
 - The Exploration Area will be a multi-phased project
 - Phase I consists of basic infrastructure (pathway, fencing, etc.); construction of a sand area/fossil dig; logs of various sizes, lengths and directions for climbing; a “sticks and stones” area for kids to play and build; and an outdoor classroom with a small stage to combine nature with the arts.
 - They are currently working with Impression 5 on the archeological dig element. There will be items of varying sizes including a mammoth tusk, molars, and other small fossils. They are very excited about the educational component for this area with all the cultural history and how it is to be layered.
 - For funding, the Foundation applied and received two grants; a \$5,000 grant from the Dart Foundation and a \$5,000 grant from Jackson National Life. The Foundation is raffling off three (3) bikes from Velocipede Peddler with tickets on sale until the annual Turtle Toast when the winning tickets will be drawn
 - Plans are underway for the annual Turtle Toast which will include wine tasting and a silent auction. Information to be sent out in two weeks
 - Commissioner Stephens suggested applying to MSUFCU for a grant. He will forward the contact information to the Nature Center.
 - Director Maisner reported the large number of volunteers, grant funding and sweat equity that is moving this project forward.
 - Suggestion was made to contact a chain saw artist to carve out the seating area such as the Wood Carvers Association

5. **Commissioner Reports and Comments**

Commissioner Stephens reported he provided assistance to a group of seniors from the local senior facility to fish at the Central Park pond.

Chair Wilson reported the fireworks were wonderful.

6. **Approval of Minutes**

- a. June 24, 2014 Work Session Meeting Minutes – no changes
- b. June 24, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes – page 3, under Director’s Report, last line, after “Ingham County Road Department” insert “on the Harris Nature Center side of the Red Cedar River”; page 4; under #e, Orlando Park Maintenance, delete “and clear the trail to Mud Lake (on the park property).”; page 7, under #12 Discussion Items, delete “and assignments were made”.

Commissioner Banas wished success to retiring staff member Parks and Grounds Maintenance Lead Work Scott Stillman. She asked to have Orlando Park added to the list of parks to be cleaned up this fall, to have the remaining mulch spread around the trees, to pull out the dead butterfly bushes, to replace the missing checker chips.

7. Communications

A. Items to/from the Public

1. From: Barb Scott; RE: thank you for attending group meeting
2. To: Eckhart Dersch; From: Nick Sanchez; RE: Red Cedar Preserve
3. To: Cheryl Loudon, Troop Leader, Junior Girl Scout Troop 30219; RE: Thank you for landscaping Snell Towar Recreation Center
4. To: Helen Tanner; RE: landscape plan in the Historical Village
5. From: Norval Burgett; RE: thank you to staff for Celebrate Downtown Okemos event

B. Commission Information

1. July Calendar of Events for Parks & Recreation
2. Lansing State Journal: **July 2:** New Island park celebrates opening
3. Towne Courier: **June 1:** Meridian Fishing Derby to be held; Register now for track and field meet; **June 8:** Insect Safari with Dad at Harris Nature Center June 15; Take a guided walk June 13 at nature center; Community band's music in park series to kick off June 18; Meridian to fall vacancy on Park Commission; **June 15:** Music in the Park summer series starts June 18; HNC offers preschool nature camps June 24-27; Outdoor Adventures Camp at HNC June 23-26; **June 22:** Campfire program at HNC June 28; One-day nature camps at HNC in July being offered; Outdoor Adventures Camp at HNC June 23-26; HNC offers preschool nature camps; **June 29:** HNC offers preschool nature camp; Toddler nature camps at HNC; One-day nature camps at HNC on offer; Guided evening walk for people dogs July 11

C. Staff Inquiries/Response

CHAIR WILSON MOVED, COMMISSIONER JARAMILLO SECONDED, TO ACCEPT AND PLACE THE ITEMS OF COMMUNICATION ON FILE.

8. Director's Report

HNC Coordinator Rich reported on the HNC activities as follows:

- the attendance numbers for summer camps have been steady
- Howl at the Moon is in its tenth year
- Stewardship Mornings are well attended with regulars and some new attendees; for the last two months, they have been pulling Garlic Mustard and will be pulling Japanese Hedge Parsley next
- There have been two work days on the Nature Exploration Area with nine volunteers on each date

- Looking forward to opening of the Van Atta Road bridge; there is a beautiful walkway with a nice slope to the path that connects to Legg Park; special thanks to the Ingham County Road Department and their staff for keeping the Center staff informed on the progress of the bridge and for construction of the new dock
- Looking for an Eagle Scout Candidate to complete the access connection from the HNC driveway to the new dock

Director Maisner distributed the Department's June monthly report and summarized the following:

- She will be before the Zoning Board of Appeals seeking variances needed to construct an accessible pathway in Wonch Park; the pathway is possible through the award of a grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources; the Township has received approval from the Department of Environmental Quality.
- The proposed 2015 Budget and Capital Improvements Program projects are due in July
- The Farmers Market is open Wednesdays and Saturdays, from 8 am to 2 pm until the end of October
- Music in the Park is hosted by the Friends of Historic Meridian on Wednesday evenings in the Historical Village until the end of July
- Have received positive comments and feedback on the fireworks display on July 4th; the display was approximately 15 minutes at a cost of \$19,000 with over 15,000 in attendance.
- Steve Brunner and volunteers from the Michigan Mountain Biking Association will be making improvements to the Eastgate Park pump track; the material is from the Cornell Road project
- Special thanks to the Ingham County Road Department for the improvements to the Legg Park entry drive as part of the Van Atta Road bridge improvement project
- Staff will be hosting a dedication of the Eleanor Luecke Memorial and rededication of the Claire Twohy Memorial Garden on July 22 at noon to thank the Meridian Garden Club for adopting garden maintenance and to have a ribbon cutting of the Eleanor Luecke Memorial;
- Parks and Grounds Maintenance Lead Worker Scott Stillman announced his retirement. He has been with the Township over 35 years and has been a great leader for the staff. His knowledge of the parks and strong work ethic will be missed.
- Special thanks to Towar Community Concerns Committee for applying for and receiving a grant of \$6,000 from the Capital Region Community Foundation for the Summer Playground Program at the Snell-Towar Recreation Center. The attendees are also receiving free lunch daily from the federally funded program through Lansing Public Schools.

9. New Business

PUBLIC COMMENT

a. Eagle Scout Business (if needed)

None

10. Unfinished Business

PUBLIC COMMENT

a. None

11. Other Business

PUBLIC COMMENT

a. **Special Meeting to discussion proposed 2015 Budget and Capital Improvements Program Programs**

Chair Wilson reported staff will be scheduling a special meeting within the next two weeks to discuss the proposed 2015 Budget and Capital Improvements Program.

12. Discussion Items

PUBLIC COMMENT

a. **Park Millage Ballot Proposal**

The following information was offered by Commissioners and Staff:

- the proposed new Park Millage will be on the August 5 ballot and will support the park system, maintenance, improvements and Harris Nature Center.
- the park system has approximately 900 acres but only 200 are developed
- under the current millage, the majority of the funds are absolved by staff salaries and benefits thereby leaving a small amount for maintenance and improvements
- for the last thirty years, the parks have been funded by 1/3 mill and the Commission and staff work very hard to keep the parks from degrading but in order to continue, the new millage is required
- currently 1/3 of the Park Millage budget is taken up by the operation of the Harris Nature Center and without the new millage, that operation may be impacted.
- The Township works with the Friends of Historic Meridian to keep the Meridian Historical Village operational but the safety of the buildings are the Township's responsibility and funds are needed for their upkeep
- the last ten years have been spent on planning for park projects such as Wonch Park improvements, Towner Road Park development, etc.
- Inflation costs have continued to go up, but the park millage has continued to go down
- We have a great volunteer network, staff and facilities but we need to keep the ball rolling and while this new millage will not solve all the needs, it will fund necessary improvements and overdue upgrades to the parks.

- We need to invest in our parks because they are an extension of our own back yards and schools who use these areas for learning and recreational opportunities and activities.
- This new millage will allow for a wider variety of grant application opportunities; funding is needed for grant match and the larger the match, the more favorable the grant application is viewed

13. Final Comments

None

14. Announcements

- a. Next Regular Meeting Date: Tuesday, August 12, 2014 Town Hall
- b. Farmers' Market – Wednesdays and Saturdays; 8 am - 2 pm; Central Park
- c. Van Atta Road closed from Grand River south to bridge; access to Harris Nature Center from Jolly Road OPEN

15. Public Remarks

None

16. Closed Session

None

17. Adjournment

COMMISSIONER JARAMILLO MOVED, CHAIR WILSON SECONDED, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.