

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN

**LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD**

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 9, 2011

7:00 p.m. Meeting Room – Meridian Service Center

**Members Present:** Tom Woiwode, Chair; Members Frank Hatfield, Mark Stephens, James Kielbaso, Dave Caszatt, Margo Smith, Steve Webster

**Members Absent:** Mary Helmbrecht, Vice-Chair

**Staff:** Jane Greenway, Land Management Coordinator

**Public Present:** Michael Thomas, Layne Cameron, Eckhart Dersch, Julie Brixie, Tim Potter

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chairman Woiwode at 7:05 p.m.
2. **Approve Minutes:** MOTION was made by Dave Caszatt, seconded by Mark Stephens to approve the minutes for the January 12, 2011 Land Preservation Advisory Board as written. MOTION carried unanimously.
3. **Addition to Agenda:**
  - a. Park Commission correspondence dated February 4, 2011
4. **Public Remarks – Pathways in Land Preserves**
  - a. Julie Brixie
    - Requested that the LPAB consider that bicycles be allowed on some of the land preserves, where appropriate, for the purpose of creating non-motorized transportation links. The “Rysberg” land preserve, located west of the Meridian Service Center, and the Red Cedar Glen Preserve, located between Sylvan Glen Road and Legg Park, would be suitable.
    - Requested that the LPAB consider non-motorized transportation when developing the management plans for each preserve.
    - Suggested that the Bicycle/Pedestrian Pathway Millage may be able to fund the pathways and associated fencing or other deterrents to fragile areas.
    - The objective is not to create a pathway between the shortest points, but to create a safe, off-road connection.
    - Educational signage could be posted about the importance of protecting the land preserves and the habitats that are being protected.

- b. Layne Cameron
- Requested a connector trail between Sylvan Glen Road and Legg Park. A “single trail” connection would improve safety because bicyclists would not have to access Meridian Riverfront Park via Grand River Avenue to Van Atta Road.
  - Described his appreciation for the parks and land preserves.
  - Bicyclists are illegally using the existing path in the Red Cedar Glen Preserve or are trespassing on railroad property to make the connection to Legg Park.
  - Requested increased access to the township properties that are financially supported by township residents.
  - Works with the International Trailbuilding Mountain Bike Association. He described how their group has designed deterrents for fragile areas, including stile gates similar to the entrance of MSU’s Baker Woodlot, fences, signs, and vegetation. The majority of bicyclists are very responsible and are a self-governing group.
  - Offered to maintain the future trail.
  - Distributed a letter requesting the connection.
- c. Tim Potter
- Described the recent creation of a group, “Friends of Meridian Pathways”, developed to support the existing and proposed pathways in the township.
  - Requested that the LPAB consider interconnected paths through some of the land preserves.
  - Currently helps maintain the trails at Eastgate, Legg, and Ted Black Woods Parks.
  - The “rule” amongst trail riders is to not ride in early spring when damage could be done to the trails. Bicyclists are a self-enforcing group. Encouraging more people on the preserves means more eyes on the land to protect it.
  - Offered to maintain the future trail.
- d. Mike Thomas
- Served on the Land Preservation Advisory Board for ten years.
  - Described that the issue of pathways has been discussed by the LPAB numerous times.
  - The intent of the Land Preservation program is to create nature preserves, not multiple use recreational opportunities.
  - The November 2010 renewal of the land preservation millage confirmed that the township residents support nature preserves.
  - There were existing trails on some of the preserves prior to the township acquisition. The decision to construct a pathway on the “Rysberg” preserve was in place prior to acquisition.

- The primary concern with allowing bicycles on the Red Cedar Glen Preserve is that it would be difficult to monitor bicycles that leave the pathway and ride into the sensitive floodplain area.
  - The zoning ordinance states that it is possible to prohibit the public from areas that are sensitive or have endangered plants.
- e. Eckhart Dersch
- Supported the statement from Mike Thomas.
  - The intent of the Land Preservation program was to protect special and unique properties.
  - If pathways are created on the land preserves, the fragile areas must be protected. The stewardship plans will outline sensitive areas.
  - Personal observations have revealed that bicycles create more damage than walkers.

**5. LPAB Discussion about Pathways on Land Preserves**

- a. Frank Hatfield
- Deterrents are very important to keep bicyclists off of the trail along the Red Cedar River. There is currently a bad erosion problem near the streams crossing the preserve; a bridge or bridges are needed.
  - There is also the issue of trailheads, specifically the ramifications of a trailhead at the end of Sylvan Glen Road.
- b. Steve Webster
- The Land Preservation millage is intended to protect the properties. To develop them for recreational purposes would go against what the residents voted for. The LPAB has an obligation to protect the investment that the voters passed.
  - If a trail is developed in the Red Cedar Glen, it could be alongside a 10' fence, parallel to the railroad tracks. The design could be similar to areas along the river-trail through Michigan State University.
  - Suggested that Chair Woiwode write a letter to the Township Board to acknowledge the recent change to the Township Board Policy Goals regarding "primitive pathways" on the land preserves.
- c. Tom Woiwode
- The LPAB creates management plans that discuss appropriate protection strategies.
  - Requested that the guests work with township staff and the LPAB to help identify opportunities for pathways in the preserves. Also requested that the guests accept that some of the preserves are too sensitive for pathways.
  - Requested that township staff contact the guests when developing a management plan.

- The Township Board recently amended their Goals and Ends Statements to include “primitive pathways” in the land preserves.
  - The management plans for each preserve will include ways to address potential problems. Suggested that we start out assuming the best, develop the trails, and if it doesn’t work or there is damage, the trails will be closed.
  - The Northwest Land Preserve is in better shape than when it was purchased. There were existing paths when the preserve was acquired.
  - Citizen stewards are an important part of path development and maintenance.
- d. Margo Smith
- Agreed that the LPAB must protect the fragile natural areas, but is interested in working with the bicyclists to explore pathways.
  - Michigan Nature Association uses assigned stewards to monitor the use of the natural areas.
- e. Mark Stephens
- Stated that certain studies show that walking can create as much trail damage as bicycling.
- f. Dave Caszatt
- The natural pathways in the Northwest Preserve have been a great experience. Neighbors help maintain the paths and clear trees. There have been wildflower walks, invasive species pulls, and other events to encourage the appreciation of the northwest preserve.

**6. Resolutions of Appreciation**

- a. Resolutions of Appreciation were presented to former LPAB members Michael Thomas and Eckhart Dersch.

MOTION was made by James Kielbaso, seconded by Dave Caszatt, to vote on the Resolutions of Appreciation.

**Roll Call Vote:**      **YEAS:** Woiwode, Webster, Hatfield, Smith, Stephens, Kielbaso, Caszatt

**NAYS:** None

Motion carried.

- b. Eckhart Dersch thanked the LPAB for the resolution and offered his continued assistance with LPAB matters.



