

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2014  
6 PM – MERIDIAN SERVICE CENTER

Members Present: Julie Brixie, Roland Harmes, Frank Hatfield, Jon Mayes, Robert Rusch, Margo Smith,

Members Absent: James Kielbaso, Mark Stephens

Staff: Land and Management Coordinator Jane Greenway; Administrative Assistant II Robin Faust

Others: Doug Gowan

1. Call Meeting to Order

Vice Chair Mayes called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

2. Approve Agenda

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER SMITH SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE AMENDED MEETING AGENDA AS DISTRIBUTED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

3. Public Remarks

None

4. Approve Minutes for July 16, 2014

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER SMITH SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE MARCH 16, 2014 MINUTES AS SUBMITTED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

5. Communications

Board Member Smith showed the Board Members the published article she wrote about the Northridge Land Preserve for newsletter for the three neighboring homeowner associations (see July 16, 2014 minutes) .

6. Presentations

a. Eagle Scout Project Proposal

Coordinator Greenway reported that Eagle Scout Candidate Ben Holland presented a project to construct a split rail fence in the Red Cedar Preserve. He asked to complete his project during the summer break. Normally, the project would have been presented to the Land Preservation Board for approval but due to the time constraints, staff reviewed and approved the project.

Eagle Scout Candidate Ben Holland, Okemos Troop 109, stated he constructed a 240 foot the split rail fence in the Red Cedar Preserve. While constructing the fence, his parents agreed to donate an additional 20 feet making the completed project 260 feet which was the entire length of the trail. The wood he used is cedar. During project day, there were some challenges such as the upgrade in the area, some rocky areas and some deep tree roots. He was able to follow the landscape with assistance from Brian VanOrder of Michigan Demolition. The fence posts are down 21 inches and ten scouts assisted with the project. The total cost of the project is \$512.72 and he has raised \$202.72 to date. He asked the Land Preservation Board to consider a donation to his project of approximately \$310.

When asked if there is a policy on Eagle Scout Project contributions, Coordinator Greenway reported it is normally 1/3 of the project costs.

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER RUSCH  
SECONDED, TO APPROVE A 1/3 MATCH OF THE TOTAL PROJECT  
COST FOR THE EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT IN CEDAR BEND PRESERVE.

Roll Call

AYES: Robert Rusch, Frank Hatfield, Margo Smith, Roland Harmes, Julie  
Brixie, Jon Mayes

NAYES: None

Motion passed.

Eagle Scout Candidate Holland was asked to submit a copy of the invoices totaling \$512.72 and to notify the Board Member of his Eagle Scout Award ceremony.

Doug Gowan, Lifetouch Photography, volunteered to match the remaining costs of Eagle Scout Candidate Holland's project.

7. Old Business  
A. Rezoning Land Preserves

Board Member Brixie reported the Land Preservation Board discussed the rezoning request at their May meeting for the parcel adjacent to Forest Grove Preserve on Saginaw Highway. At the May meeting, Board Members asked Coordinator Greenway to remit a memorandum outlining the Board's concerns with potential development options for the parcel. At a recent Planning Commission meeting, the Commission directed their staff to initiate a rezoning of the Forest Grove Preserve from C2 (Commercial) its current zoning and the zoning it was in when purchased to RR (Rural Residential). The question is raised on whether the residential rezoning request would bring about unintended consequences. While rural residential would allow for greater setbacks, we do not want to create an atmosphere where this type of action would prevent future donations or options to purchase future parcels. It was suggested to send a Land Preservation Board Member to one of the future Planning Commission meetings along with a memorandum clarifying the LPAB's position that such rezoning could have a potential negative impact on future acquisitions, especially through land donations. When advice was sought from the Township Attorney, the Township Attorney does not recommend rezoning because it could cause a neighboring parcel to have development issues thereby putting the Township in a difficult legal position. It is recommended to keep the land preserves in the zoning that they were purchased in or as designated on the land use map.

Discussion:

- Reviewed the zoning classifications
- How potential impacts could have a negative impact on adjacent property owners
- Land Preserve zoning classifications on the Land Use Map
- Need to re-clarify the May memorandum

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD SECONDED, TO WRITE ANOTHER MEMORANDUM TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION SHARING THE REASONS FOR OBJECTING TO THE REZONING REQUEST FOR FOREST GROVE PRESERVE AND BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE WILL ATTEND A FUTURE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING TO EXPLAIN THE LAND PRESERVATION BOARD'S CONCERNS WITH REZONING FROM C2 TO RR.

Roll Call

AYES: Robert Rusch, Frank Hatfield, Margo Smith, Roland Harmes, Julie Brixie, Jon Mayes

NAYES: None

Motion passed.

8. New Business

a. Eagle Scout Project Proposal

This action was taken earlier in the meeting.

b. Deer Management Program – addition of Sumbal Land Preserve

Coordinator Greenway showed a map illustrating the Sumbal Land Preserve which is adjacent to Ferguson Park. She also showed a hunter's map with GPS coordinates to show where a hunter is to hunt from. The Township Board has asked staff to include as many parcels as possible in the Deer Management Program and due to the number of complaints about deer and accidents in this parcel, she is asking to include this parcel. Staff has reviewed the site and believes it is safe to hunt in the area and will be in contact with the school about this new area.

Discussion:

- Concern about killing a deer next to a school (there is a 14 acre parcel between the Land Preserve and the school; could include in the motion that we get School Board approval)
- Should review how this could be a potential public relations problem
- Currently hunt in many of the parks and land preserves which are adjacent to neighborhoods and visitors do not see our hunters
- When are the hunting hours (1/2 before dawn and 1/2 at dusk)
- Would like to get school board approval, illustrate the car/deer accidents; the hunter will not be close to the school; are not near the school playground; and there is a substation between the sites
- Staff has forwarded the car/deer accident map for publication in the Towne Courier and created a deer-wise educational poster for publication and distribution to the schools
- What about using professional hunts/archers like other jurisdictions (potential cost of \$170,000; DNR states if goal is to reduce deer, use guns but when surveying residents, they do not support use of guns but do support use of bows)
- There are a lot of deer accidents in this general area and a lot of complaints from residents about the big deer herd in this area
- Staff has received a number of calls from neighboring municipalities asking Township to share how the program is run; good public relation program with our deer hunters and residents; venison is donated to the food banks

BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD MOVED, BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE SECONDED, TO ADD THE SUMBAL LAND PRESERVE TO THE DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AS WE DO WITH OTHER PARCELS IN THE PROGRAM.

Discussion:

- Will this require an additional approval by the Township Board (staff will check)
- Would you consider holding hunting on this parcel on weekends only (having this one different from other parcels which are adjacent to neighborhoods and visitors are in the area would not be good; question having one parcel different from the other parcels)
- There is a parcel between the school and land preserve
- Hunters are very cautious
- Okemos cross country runners go through the Hartrick Park and the Red Cedar Glen, and the areas are posted
- Request the School Board be notified if this is approved (Staff will reach out and share educational materials)

Board Member Hatfield called the question.

Roll Call

AYES: Robert Rusch, Frank Hatfield, Margo Smith, Julie Brixie, Jon Mayes

NAYES: Roland Harmes

Motion passed.

c. Land Preserve Names

Board Member Brixie asked to discuss the option of changing some of the names of the land preserves and believes this would be a great placemaking project establishing name that describe the land preserves. She suggested working with Communications Department, getting neighbors input, or if there is a natural feature at the parcel, but need to verify the parcels that could get a new name. She asked staff to work on this project doing a few land preserves at a time.

9. Land Management Coordinator Report

a. Maintenance Budget

- Coordinator Greenway referred to the plan she created November 2013 which shows an endowment account balance of approximately \$2,700,000 which earns approximately \$14,000 in increase that can be used each year. Salaries are approximately \$39,000 each year. The first millage built up the endowment with some allowed to be used for acquisition and maintenance. There is approximately \$350,000 left to be spent. The second millage, which expires in 2019, brings in approximately \$500,000 of unrestricted funds to use

each year. The LPA Board has exceeded the goal to acquire 10% of preserves, which was the goal set by the first LPAB. Coordinator Greenway suggested being aggressive in implementing the management and stewardship plans at a total cost of \$1,200,000 leaving approximately \$4,000,000 in the endowment fund in 2019.

Discussion:

- What are the investments (Board Member Brixie explained the investment policy)
  - Asked for a report for a report showing how much was spent to acquire the parcel, how much has been spent on management and stewardship, etc. (the Land Preserve Millage is designated for specific purchasing, management and stewardship of parcels and the funds are not included in the Township General Fund; was also referred to the Township website illustrating all of the stewardship plans)
  - Have heard complaints that the parcels purchased are sites that cannot be developed anyway (sometimes parcels are bought because they create wildlife corridors; some parcels have been donated)
  - What would like to do this year (signage, boundary surveys, invasive species removal)
- b. Red Cedar River Water Trail Brochure
- Staff distributed the brochure, reported on the creation of an accessible launch at the Harris Nature Center and working with Jeff Potter to creating informal launch sites along the water trail
  - At the Harris Nature Center, there is currently a dock that was constructed as part of the Van Atta Road bridge construction since the original dock as part of a grant from 1972.
  - Board Member Mayes reported on his travel on the river from the MDOT launch to the Harris Nature Center with only one problem site.
  - Board Member Rusch spoke about the canoe and kayak company from Williamston developing and using the Harris Nature Center as a jump off point on the Grand River.

10. Other

Board Member Harmes reported on the grant funding available through hunting and fishing licenses. Coordinator Greenway reported she submitted a grant for Legg Park. Since more than one grant can be submitted, staff will work on a grant for a land preserve during the next funding year.

11. Public Comment

Doug Gowan stated he and his partner are very interested in having their parcel considered for the land preservation program. Vice Chair Mayes asked to schedule a meeting with Mr. Gowan and his partner along with staff to discuss

the proposal next week. Board Members thanked Mr. Gowan for his generous donation toward the eagle scout project in the land preserve.

12. Closed Session

BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD MOVED, BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE SECONDED, TO MOVE INTO CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS LAND ACQUISITION ISSUE.

Roll Call:

AYES: Robert Rusch, Frank Hatfield, Margo Smith, Roland Harmes, Julie Brixie, Jon Mayes

NAYS: None

The Land Preservation Advisory Board entered closed session at 7:47 pm.

BOARD MEMBER SMITH MOVED, BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE SECONDED, TO RETURN TO OPEN SESSION.

Roll Call:

AYES: Robert Rusch, Frank Hatfield, Margo Smith, Roland Harmes, Julie Brixie, Jon Mayes

NAYS: None

The Land Preservation Advisory Board returned to open session at 8:44 pm.

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER RUSCH SECONDED, TO TAKE SUCH ACTION AS WAS DISCUSSED DURING CLOSED SESSION. Voice vote. Motion passed.

13. Adjournment

BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD MOVED, BOARD MEMBER SMITH SECONDED, TO CLOSE THE MEETING.

The meeting closed at 8:45 pm.