



CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PARK COMMISSION VIRTUAL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Virtual via Zoom Conferencing
Tuesday, May 18, 2021 12:00 pm

PRESENT: Amanda Lick, Mary Nardo-Farris, Mark Stephens, Ami Van Antwerp

EXCUSED: Michael McDonald

STAFF: LuAnn Maisner, Director of Parks and Recreation; Derek Perry, Director of Engineering and Public Works, Deputy Township Manager; Jane Greenway, Senior Parks and Land Management Coordinator; Emma Campbell, Land Stewardship Coordinator; Kati Adams, Parks & Land Preservation Superintendent/Harris Nature Center Coordinator; Robin Faust, Deputy Clerk; Bridget Cannon, Administrative Assistant; Lauren Fletcher, Parks and Recreation Intern; Thomas Carey, Farmers' Market Manager

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Lick called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Stephens moved **TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED**. Seconded by Commissioner Nardo-Farris.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

3. PRESENTATIONS

A. Resolution of Appreciation for Robin Faust, Deputy Clerk

Chair Lick moved **TO SUPPORT THE RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION FOR ROBIN FAUST FOR HER 21 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT AND TO THE PARK COMMISSION**. Seconded by Commissioner Stephens.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

B. Pathway Master Plan Review -Derek Perry, Director of Engineering and Public Works; Deputy Township Manager

Director Perry outlined the Pathway Master Plan process and recommendations for additions and schedule of projected construction.

C. Eagle Scout Project Proposal Zachary Sieloff

Eagle Scout candidate Sieloff presented his proposed project of installing a bike fix-it station at Eastgate Park with tools and an air pump. Commissioner Stephens recommended adding a lift for bikes for easier access to the tools. The Commissioners expressed their gratitude for this project. The Commissioners suggested a fundraiser for the bike lift and tools and recommended posting a donation request at the Eastgate Park from the bike community and volunteers.

Commissioner Nardo-Farris moved **TO ACCEPT THE EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT PROPOSAL FROM ZACHARY SIELOFF TO INSTALL A BIKE FIX-IT STATION AT EASTGATE PARK WITH TOOLS AND AIR PUMP.** Seconded by Commissioner Stephens.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Van Antwerp moved **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 2021 REGULAR MEETING.** Seconded by Commissioner Stephens.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Small Scale Prairie Restoration
- B. Nancy Moore tick sampling
- C. Spring cleaning at Hartrick Park
- D. Safari Club International article
- E. Letters of Support for Towner Road Park
- F. Universal Access Advisory Board Press Release

Commissioner Stevens moved **TO ACCEPT AND PLACE THE ITEMS OF COMMUNICATION ON FILE.** Seconded by Commissioner Van Antwerp

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

7. ACTION ITEMS

A. Recommendations for Pathway Master Plan

The Commissioners decided to engage in a more in-depth discussion on potential plan recommendations during a work session scheduled for June 8.

By consensus, the commission agreed to **TABLE ACTION ON THIS ITEM AND TO RESUME THE DISCUSSION ON JUNE 8 DURING A SCHEDULED WORK SESSION.**

B. DNR Grant Agreement-Okemos Road Parcel Acquisition

Director Maisner shared that the grant agreement was recently received from the DNR for acquisition of property located at 5280 Okemos Road for future use as a dedicated entrance to Nancy Moore Park and as a pathway hub for non-motorized transportation. The estimated cost of the project is \$170,000 with the grant funding 75% and a local match of 25% or \$42,500.

The following resolution was offered by Commissioner Nardo-Farris and supported by Commissioner Stephens:

MOVE TO REQUEST THAT THE TOWNSHIP BOARD ENTER INTO A PROJECT AGREEMENT WITH THE MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACQUIRING A 1.85-ACRE PARCEL (PARCEL #33-02-02-16-200-011) LOCATED AT 5280 OKEMOS ROAD, HASLETT, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$170,000 WITH 75% OF THE COSTS (\$127,500) FUNDED BY THE MNRTF GRANT AND COMMITTING \$42,500 OR 25% OF COSTS FROM THE TOWNSHIP'S PARK MILLAGE FUND. THIS SITE, WHEN ACQUIRED, WILL HOST A DEDICATED ENTRANCE TO NANCY MOORE PARK AND SERVE AS A TRAILHEAD AREA FOR USERS OF THE PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE PATHWAY SYSTEM.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

C. Labyrinth Proposal for Central Park

Director Maisner and Parks and Land Management Coordinator, Jane Greenway presented the proposed labyrinth project to be constructed in Central Park as a donation from the Rajendra Family. A proposed agreement would outline the expectations of both parties moving forward. A final draft will be presented for action at the June 8 regular meeting.

The following motion was offered by Commissioner Stephens and supported by Commissioner Nardo-Farris:

MOVE TO SUPPORT THE REQUEST FOR MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION STAFF TO WORK WITH THE RAJUNDRRA FAMILY ON DEVELOPMENT OF A LABYRINTH IN CENTRAL PARK. THIS IMPROVEMENT WILL SERVE THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY AND WILL BE A BEAUTIFUL PARK IMPROVEMENT DESIGNED FOR REST, RELAXATION AND GENERAL ENJOYMENT.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Love a Park Day – Wednesday, May 26, 2021 6 pm- 8pm – Director Maisner will contact Commissioners later this week to schedule park assignments.

B. Ribbon Cutting Events in June – Now that we are getting close to finishing park grant-funded projects, we anticipate hosting ribbon cutting events in late June. Director Maisner will forward possible dates for consideration.

C. Farmer's Market Update – Introduction of Thomas Carey, Farmers' Market Manager. Discussion of 55 vendors and well over 70 booths, as some vendors do have two booths. The Market had over 3,000 visitors at Marketplace on the Green, Saturday, May 15th. Meridian Township Parks and Recreation strives to maintain a fun place for the community to gather safely -- outdoors. There was a discussion of gradual relaxation of the mask requirement. We anticipate the market to become more popular and have more visitors throughout the summer. The market provides access to opportunity to shop outdoors for fresh fruit and vegetables. The Wednesday night Market is slotted to begin in July, the community is invited to attend for live music, corn hole, and fresh produce!

9. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A written report was provided to the commissioners and is added as an addendum to these minutes.

10. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

11. OTHER MATTERS AND COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Van Antwerp is excited to see the residents out and about, enjoying the weather! She is excited to engage the community in some of these upcoming projects and events.

Commissioner Stevens shared a painted rock he found in a park and would like to possibly see a painted rock trail for the community to enjoy.

Director Maisner would love to engage the youth in creating art in Central Park South and encourage students to participate in creation of painted rocks and possible art projects.

Commissioner Nardo-Farris would like to circle back and tie up loose ends on projects, such as Girl Scout micro pantries. Possible site visits and/or meet at specific parks for the Park Commission meeting

12. ADJOURNMENT – Hearing no objections, Chair Lick adjourned the meeting adjourned at 1:44 pm

13. NEXT MEETING

A. The next meeting is scheduled on Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 5:30pm work session and 6pm regular meeting.

Parks and Recreation Department Update

April 29, 2021

Listed is a brief summary of activity being managed currently by our Staff:

Current Collaborations:

- **Michigan Mountain Biking Association** – Renovation, expansion and maintenance of the Eastgate Park Pump Track. Work in progress now.
- **Towar Gardens Neighborhood Association** (Formerly TC3) obtained a local grant and purchased 205 trees for planting in the Towar Woods Land Preserve. Emma Campbell and Dave Caszatt have organized the planting in celebration of Arbor Day, for Saturday, May 1.
- April is Child Abuse Awareness Month – **Small Talk Agency** and volunteers planted blue pinwheel gardens on Township Properties for the month of April.
- **Belinda Wilson, Graduate Student in Fisheries and Wildlife at MSU** is working with Dr. Jean Tsao studying the emerging risk of ticks and tick-borne pathogens in Michigan. They are monitoring the invasion of black-legged (=deer) ticks, which are responsible for transmitting the Lyme disease pathogen.
- **Toby Petrice, Ph.D., Research Entomologist, MSU and US Forest Service** is continuing their long term EAB research at Legg Park, Harris Nature Center, Central Park and Nancy Moore Park.
- **Forest Hills Neighborhood Association** – Park Clean up – **Cecelia Kramer** and nine other residents on Saturday, April 24.
- Assisting **Haslett Community Church** with a playground replacement project
- Providing assistance to **Williamstown Township** on a new playground project
- Providing assistance with **Tacoma Hills Neighborhood Association** Playground replacement project.
- Presented information to the **City of Southfield** Board about our Deer Management Program.
- Presented information to **Cascade Township Parks Board** about our Deer Management Program.
- Coordinated with **Michigan Audubon Society** to expand Purple Martin nesting sites on township property near Lake Lansing.
- Collaborating on a research project with **MSU Forestry Field Studies** course where students will study the effects of a controlled burn on Oak regeneration and recommending a management plan moving forward.
- **Kiwanis Club** installed 3 new benches in the large dog park.

Current Grant Projects:

- **Harris Nature Center Pavilion –MNRTF** – This project has one more item on the punch list to fix and it will be ready to open to the public. Estimated opening: May 15. Estimated Date to request final reimbursement: June 1.
- **Harris Nature Center Restroom – LWCF** – We obtained the Certificate of Occupancy this week so the restrooms are now open. Estimated Date to request final reimbursement: June 1.
- **Central Meridian Regional Trail Connector Project –MNRTF** – This project has had its challenges for sure but completion is in sight. Final paving is scheduled for next week.
- **Gateway Footbridge to the Meridian Historical Village – LWCF** – This project is just awaiting a few final touches such as installation of benches, bike loops etc. The Meridian Garden Club will be utilizing the storage area for easier access to their gardening tools and equipment during the spring and summer months.
- **New Trail and Pathway Map – Ingham County Parks and Trails Millage** – To me, this is one of the more meaningful projects we are working on currently. Together, the Township has created an accessible non-motorized transportation system consisting of over 70 miles of paved pathway; acquired nearly 1,000 acres of beautiful parks; acquired over 1,000 acres of land preserves and we have lacked a good, usable map to promote, communicate and celebrate access to these community assets! When completed, it is our intention to mail this map to all of our residents, place them in multiple public places, and also have it in a digital format for the website. Unique to this map is the inclusion of historical features which are marked with icons on the map with a brief description in a text box. A second phase of this project includes placing interpretive signage at each of the sites highlighted on the map creating an historical walking tour throughout our community. Committee members include: Bob Wilson (local bicycle enthusiast and former Executive Director of the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance), Jane Rose (local historian and former Executive Director of Friends of Historic Meridian), and Township staff members Jay Graham, Jane Greenway, Cara Maney, Brandie Yates, Kati Adams, Derek Perry and myself. We have contracted with a mapmaker in Traverse City to get us to the finish line.
- **LEAP/PNC Art Grant** – Working together with our Director of Economic Development, Amber Clark, Jane Greenway drafted and submitted the application for an art installation at Marketplace on the Green. Two \$10,000 grants were awarded; one to us and the other to Delhi Township. The Request for Proposals to artists is currently being promoted to the local art community and is available on the Township website. Artists are asked to submit up to 5 concept plans for consideration. The total project completion deadline is October 31, 2021.
- **Music at Marketplace on the Green** – Mike Devlin secured a \$3,000 donation for music on Wednesday nights, beginning in July, in conjunction with the Farmers' Market. The Farmers Market will begin Wednesday hours in July, but the musical entertainment is tentative based on COVID regulations in place at that time.

- **Bird Overlook Deck at Harris Nature Center** – The Harris Nature Center Foundation and Capital Region Community foundation provided funding for this amenity consisting of a handicapped accessible 12'x12' elevated platform with spotting scopes that can be used by the casual user or for organized classes. This project was completed earlier this year and we are looking forward to hosting a formal ribbon-cutting event and appreciation ceremony this summer.
- **Towner Road Park Multi-generational, Accessible play/Exercise Zone** – This application was submitted on April 1st. A new requirement of applications is to obtain an archeological survey of the project site. That work is underway currently.
- **Okemos Road Property Acquisition (MSU-Lake Lansing Trail Hub)**- we have been notified that the legislature will soon be acting on the bill authorizing the release of funds for the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund approved projects. In preparation, staff has obtained a site survey and now securing required environmental testing and reporting documentation. Once we execute the grant agreement with the DNR, the final acquisition activity can begin.

Staff News:

- Longtime Administrative Assistant in the Parks and Recreation Department, **Robin Faust**, accepted a position in the Township Clerk's office in the role of Deputy Clerk. Although we will miss greatly, we are very happy for her and her promotion.
- We are pleased to announce the hiring of **Bridget Cannon** as our new Administrative Assistant who begins with us on Monday, May 10. Bridget has experience in both local and state government and will be a great addition to our team!
- **Emma Campbell** has been working hard in the township's parks and land preserves with treating and removing invasive plants, developing restoration projects, hosting virtual trainings, promoting the Meridian Conservation Corp programs, and managing and leading Stewardship Saturdays with an average participation on 25 community volunteers. To help her expand on this work, we have hired Stewardship Intern, **Rebecca Fisher** from MSU.
- Other positions we are interviewing for currently are Assistant Naturalists at Harris Nature Center, Seasonal Maintenance Worker in Parks, and Park Ranger.

Other News:

- The **lighted crossing bollards** have been installed at the crosswalk on Central Park Drive.
- Parks Maintenance worker, Josh Cannon **renovated the Welcome Arch** at the Harris Nature Center during the winter months, as it was in desperate need of renovation.
- Parks Maintenance Team renovated (paint, new flooring) the former HNC wet lab into a **user-friendly classroom**.
- **Maintenance staff improved the footbridge in Eastgate Park** by building handrails for safety.
- **Wind Screens for the pickleball** courts at Towner Road Park have been purchased and installed.

- We are working with the Fire Department to purchase **AED equipment for Towner Road Park pickleball courts and Hillbrook Park Pickleball courts**. These improvements were funded by a donation from the pickle ball players and by a separate donation from Ron Applegate (Former owner of Tower Road Park property).
- Speaking of **wind screens**, we are in the process of purchasing 7'x19' blue windscreens with the Township logo in white for use at Marketplace on the Green to use during the Farmers Market as well as for other activities/events when needed. If this system works well, we will move forward with purchasing additional sections.
- **Dog Park Memberships:** 357 for the Large Dog Park; 356 members of the Small Dog Park. The large dog park was temporarily closed the last two weeks of March for spring maintenance.
- Jane Greenway obtained **500 Red Pine saplings** from MSU that will be distributed at the Farmers Market this Saturday.
- **Labyrinth in Central Park-Historical Village** – local resident, Dr. Rajendra and his family have offered to donate a labyrinth in honor of his family. Staff has been working with the family and created designs and cost estimates. This proposed project will be presented to the Park Commission on May 18.
- **HNC welcomed a new Eastern Screech Owl at named Eclipse.**

Programs:

- **Attached** is Emma's Meridian Conservation Corp calendar of events for March, April and May.
- **Love a Park Day/Month** – In order to better accommodate people's schedules as well as to respect COVID precautions, we will soon be posting projects in parks that potential volunteers can select to do and do them within their own time schedule.
- **Youth Sports are back! Youth Soccer** registration took place over the last few weeks with a total of 480 youth participating. Mike created rosters, confirmed coaches, finalized schedules, conducted coaches meetings and we are finally back in action with practices starting April 26.
- **Registrations for youth Baseball, Softball and Tee Ball** are also completed with work toward getting that program up and in running in a couple of weeks.
- **Adult sports registration is currently open for softball, sand volleyball and kickball.**
- **Our Senior Exercise Group** is meeting outdoors in the Central Park pavilion on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings with 30-50 participants.
- **Deer management Program** ended with record numbers! Our volunteer archery program culled 176 deer and the extended cull lead by our Police Department culled an additional 150 for a total harvest of 326 deer. Our final report is attached.
- **HNC is accepting registrations for summer camps** with great success!
- **HNC virtual Programs have gone National!** – Kati and Allison conducted a virtual science lesson to a classroom of students from an elementary school in Missouri! Talk about taking your show on the road!

The Farmers Market is now open every Saturday from 8am -1pm at Marketplace on the Green starting May 1. We have “70” booth spaces rented for opening day! This is definitely a record!

- **Our Maintenance Team** has been going full tilt preparing and opening the parks, park restrooms, mowing, and preparing fields for play. We are so fortunate to have such a dedicated staff!
- **HNC conducted their Native Plant Sale event that concludes May 1 with record gross sales of over \$6,000. Plant pick-up day is scheduled for May 1.**
- **Pavilion Reservations –**
- **Phone inquiries and walk-in traffic – our residents are excited and eager to re-engage and are calling us sometimes I think just to say “hi”. Sylvia Davis stopped by today with Panera cookies and cake just to see how we were doing. 😊**

There is more to share about everyone’s work, but I will stop here. Parks and Recreation is back in action and....looking forward to May 10 when we welcome Bridget Cannon to our team!