

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JULY 16, 2014
6 PM – MERIDIAN SERVICE CENTER

Members Present: Julie Brixie, Roland Harmes, Frank Hatfield, James Kielbaso, Jon Mayes, Robert Rusch (arrived at 6:23 pm), Margo Smith, Mark Stephens

Members Absent: None

Staff: Land and Management Coordinator Jane Greenway; Administrative Assistant II Robin Faust; Assistant Park Naturalist Nick Sanchez

Others: None

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chair Kielbaso called the meeting to order at 6 pm.

2. Approve Agenda

Under item #10, Other, add #10a, Red Cedar Glen Update; #10b, Northridge Preserve Update; #10c, Names of Land Preserves

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

3. Public Remarks

None

4. Approve Minutes for May 14, 2014

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER SMITH SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE MAY 14, 2014 MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

5. Communications

- a. From: Bruce Cohen, Capital Area Audubon Society; RE: Meridian Township Birds (Henslow's sparrows at Davis-Foster Land Preserve; Prairie Warbler sighted at North Meridian Road Park)
- b. From Eckhart Dersch; Re: Red Cedar Preserve inventory report on invasives
- c. From: Harmony Gmazel; RE: natural features inventory of Red Cedar, Davis-Foster and Central Meridian Upland Preserves

- d. From: Director of Community Planning and Development Kieselbach; RE: Rezoning #14030 (Fedewa) request to rezone approximately 5.2 acres from RR (rural residential) to C-2 (commercial); rezoning request was approved asking that special considerations be given to the neighboring land preserve; Mr. Fedewa has indicated he is interested in developing a storage unit but it would not affect the wildlife corridor; when the development project is submitted, staff will be informed and will have opportunity to comment on it; Board Member Harmes asked to have a map included with all future projects showing their location
- e. From: Land Manager Coordinator Greenway; To: Director Kieselbach; RE: Rezoning Land Preserves; at the direction of the Land Preservation Board, staff sent this memo in response to the Planning Commission's discussion on the idea of complete rezoning reclassification of all land preserves

BOARD MEMBER STEPHENS MOVED, BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD SECONDED, TO ACCEPT AND PLACE THE ITEMS OF COMMUNICATION ON FILE. Voice vote. Motion passed.

6. Presentations

None

7. Old Business

- a. Support for US Fish and Wildlife Habitat Development Agreement at Southwest Meridian Uplands Preserve

Assistant Naturalist Sanchez stated this project consists of establishing seven (7) acres of native grass and wildflower habitat on ground that is currently in a fallow state. The US Fish and Wildlife have completed site preparation activities. The Township is now responsible for pay for and installation of the plant mix. Since it was noticed that the original bid contained a mix mixture what was not comprised of Michigan genotypes, a second set of bids were taken and the native genotypes came in at a higher price, \$1,500 over the approved motion amount of \$4,500 on May 14.

BOARD MEMBER SMITH MOVED, BOARD MEMBER STEPHENS SECONDED, THAT THE LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD APPROVE THE EXPENDITURE OF UP TO \$1,500 OF MAINTENANCE FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF COVERING THE COSTS OF PURCHASING AND PLANTING SEVEN ACRES OF NATIVE GRASSES AND FORBS, AS PART OF A US FISH AND WILDLIFE PARTNERS FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE GRANT.

Roll Call:

AYES: Mark Stephens, Roland Harmes, Jon Mayes, Julie Brixie, Jim Kielbaso, Frank Hatfield, Margo Smith

NAYS: None

Motion passed.

8. New Business
a. Resolution of Appreciation for Steven Webster

The following resolution was offered by Advisory Board Member Brixie and supported by Advisory Board Member Mayes:

WHEREAS, Steven Webster served as a member of the Land Preservation Advisory Board of the Charter Township of Meridian from 2005 through 2014, as a resident member; and

WHEREAS, Steven Webster was an integral part of contributing toward the first community supported and funded program of its kind in Michigan for the acquisition and permanent preservation of ecologically important open space and natural features; and

WHEREAS, Steven Webster entertained the Board by sharing fascinating stories from his numerous visits abroad; and

WHEREAS, Steven Webster provided excellent land preservation and conservation guidance to the Board; and

WHEREAS, Steven Webster always bought delicious desserts from Dusty's Cellar when it was his turn to bring cake; and

WHEREAS, Steven Webster has devoted his time and energy to educating the public about the importance of protecting the environment and educating commissioners and staff on those environmental issues; and

WHEREAS, Steven Webster's service on the Land Preservation Advisory Board has been very beneficial to the Charter Township of Meridian, its citizens, and its natural environment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THE LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN extends its best wishes to Steven Webster and expresses its gratitude for his service to the community.

ADOPTED:

YEAS: Julie Brixie, Jon Mayes, Roland Harmes, Robert Rusch, Mark Stephens,
Margo Smith, Frank Hatfield, James Kielbaso

NAYS: None

The resolution passed.

b. Monarch Garden at Meridian Historical Village

Board Member Stephens explained the proposal to create a 1500 square foot natural area buffer around the Historical Village pond creating a seed bank and butterfly garden. His proposal is a cooperative effort and funding from the Land Preservation Advisory Board, Park Commission, Grand Learning Network and four area schools.

The Grand Learning Network will be conducting an educational workshop including a plant session with educators to plant the area on August 18 and 19. In order to prepare the site and purchase the plants to start this project, he is asking for \$1,500. The schools will be using their \$400 Grand Learning Network grants to collect and grow seeds for planting in spring 2015 and to extend the garden to the south. This project will also include educational signage which will explain the difference between Land Preservation and Parks and that this is a cooperative effort. This project is a great community outreach project, will be working in our area of the Township and will create future land stewards through these school children.

Discussion:

- Is this the best location (maybe not, but this site gets a lot of traffic, would be great educational opportunity to explain difference between land preserves and parks, experimental project to see if the buffer will keep from crossing water edge, opportunity to establish a seed bank, this is a public community spot, great opportunity to work cooperatively with schools and Park Commission)
- Question use of land preservation funds on park land (signage will be on site to explain the difference between the two; great cooperative project; will establish a future seed bank)
- Question the appropriateness (if schools lose interest, will remain in a park; could apply to DNR for funding)
- Cost breakdown – need to purchase plants and mulch of approximately \$1,000; spraying completed in house; Nick has completed soil testing and is researching best type of plants to use. Sign cost can be up to \$800
- Suggested checking private sources such as Wildones and the Garden Club
- Suggested using the donations received in memory of Mary Helmbrecht and the garden could be name the “Mary Helmbrecht Butterfly Garden”
- Have received over \$1200 in donations toward the land preservation program, in memory of Mary Helmbrecht, former clerk, who passed away December 2013.

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER SMITH SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MONARCH GARDEN IN THE MERIDIAN HISTORICAL VILLAGE AROUND THE POND AS OUTLINED BY BOARD MEMBER STEPHENS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,500; THE DONATIONS RECEIVED IN MEMORY OF MARY HELMBRECT BE USED FOR THE PROJECT; THE GARDEN BE NAMED IN HONOR OF MARY HELMBECHT; AND THE BALANCE REQUIRED COME FROM THE LAND PRESERVATION MAINTENANCE ACCOUNT.

Roll Call

AYES: Margo Smith, Frank Hatfield, Jim Kielbaso, Julie Brixie, Jon Mayes, Roland Harnes, Robert Rusch, Mark Stephens

NAYS: None

The motion passed.

c. 2014 Deer Management Program

Coordinator Greenway summarized the memo and stated that program will be conducted just like it was last year.

Assistant Park Naturalist Sanchez stated he is researching the possibility of also including an out-of-season harvest in January and February.

Discussion:

- Signage for “hot spots” (Ingham County Road Department will not install because they said they are not effective in getting drivers to slow down)
- Suggested exploring option of using professional sharp shooters in areas not large enough for hunting
- Questioned the effectiveness of the program

The following resolution was offered by Advisory Board Member Hatfield and supported by Advisory Board Member Brixie:

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian has documented numerous complaints relative to the issue of the over-population of white-tailed deer including: over-grazing of landscape plants, a high number of deer/car collisions, threats to public health, and threats to the ecological health of natural areas; and

WHEREAS a Deer Management Plan has been developed for the purpose of outlining measures for conducting a highly managed, safe and humane managed deer harvest on township-owned properties; and

WHEREAS it is recognized that controlled hunting may help control the overpopulation of white-tailed deer; and

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian has authorized staff to conduct a managed deer harvest on township-owned properties that will occur seven days per week during the regular archery season (October 1, 2014 through January 1, 2015); and

WHEREAS the managed deer harvest will utilize qualified, competent, and experienced volunteer hunters; and

WHEREAS the township-owned properties are not open to unauthorized hunting; and

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian will work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to operate under the Deer Management Assistance Program for the purpose of purchasing a large number of antlerless deer permits; and

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian’s Deer Management Program will comply with all State of Michigan rules and hunting regulations; and

WHEREAS the public will be properly notified of the deer harvest through posted signs on the designated hunting properties, township website postings, press releases in the local newspaper, and letters to owners of properties adjacent to designated hunting properties ; and

WHEREAS the majority of the venison from the harvested deer will be distributed to the hungry through local food banks; and

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian has constructed an enclosure within Lake Lansing North Park for the purpose of visually observing areas that are open to deer browsing versus areas that are not, which has indicated a significant level of damage due to over-browsing of the natural vegetation; and

WHEREAS parks and natural areas provide ecological and aesthetic beauty, improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve the quality of the air we breathe, provide vegetative buffers to development, and produce habitat for wildlife; and

WHEREAS the Charter Township of Meridian recognizes the benefits derived from parks and natural areas and appreciates benefits of local wildlife

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN THAT A TOWNSHIP-MANAGED DEER HARVEST WILL OCCUR ON THE FOLLOWING LAND PRESERVATION PROPERTIES IN 2014: NORTHWEST, NORTHRIDGE, FOREST GROVE, MERIDIAN CENTRAL WETLAND, HUBBEL, CENTRAL MERIDIAN UPLANDS, TIHART/CORNELL WETLAND, DAVIS/FOSTER, SOUTHWEST MERIDIAN UPLANDS, SOWER WOODS, RED CEDAR GLEN, AND RED CEDAR RIVER EAST.

ADOPTED:

YEAS: Frank Hatfield, Margo Smith, Mark Stephens, Jon Mayes, Julie Brixie,
James Kielbaso

NAYS: Roland Harmes

The resolution passed.

9. Land Management Coordinator Report
a. Financial Status Report

Board Member Brixie summarized the financial report (in minute book).

Discussion:

- Limited on the types of investments that can be made by government entities
- at this time we are at a historical low but hope that earnings are on their way back up
- current Millage ends 2019
- endowment is now static

b. Eagle Scout project, Ben Holland, Red Cedar Glen Preserve

Coordinator Greenway stated Ben Holland from Troop 109 will be building a split-rail fence separating private property from the Sylvan Preserve to hopefully stop trespassers as his Eagle Scout Project. He will begin construction later this week and complete by end of month. Normally he would present his project and seek

Board approval prior to construction, but due to his timeframe and he because has met and walked the site with Board Member Hatfield, who approved the project, Coordinator Greenway and Board Member Hatfield, we gave approval of the project. Ben Holland will come and present his completed project to the Board. It was noted that his brother also constructed their Eagle Scout projects in the Red Cedar Glen Land Preserve.

c. Pipeline Magazine – Drain Commissioner publication

Coordinator Greenway stated the Ember Oaks Drain project is featured on page 20.

10. Other

a. Red Cedar Glen Preserve

Board Member Hatfield stated he has been working with Assistant Park Naturalist Sanchez who has sprayed invasives (buckthorn, autumn olive, and honeysuckle) and will be spraying again this year and then will spray every year for the next few years.

The wildflower mix planted by the Drain Commissioners Office on the sides of the main drainage routes appears to be only grasses and suggested staff discuss this problem with them. Also some of the trees look sickly and may need to be replaced.

Also, the trails in Legg Park need attention. Since the mountain bike riders have stated they maintain trails, he suggested they be contacted to address this area.

Coordinator Greenway stated HOMTV is airing a spot on proper bike riding on trails in the Red Cedar Glen Land Preserve.

Since there are dog walkers in the parks and they are currently dropping their pet waste bags on the trails, staff was asked to install a waste container on the trail.

b. Northridge Land Preserve

Board Member Smith stated she was assigned the Northridge Land Preserve as part of the Adopt-A-Preserve program for the board members. She recently walked the site with Coordinator Greenway and Assistant Park Naturalist Sanchez. She also has contacted the three (3) neighborhood associations adjacent to this land preserve and the following article will appear in their newsletter

Did you know that there is a land preserve of 25 acres in your neighborhood? The Northridge Land Preserve is near the intersection of Mereford Court and Fenwick Court. Meridian Township's Land Preservation Program was established in 2000 by a vote of the people for a millage to acquire, preserve, and protect natural areas throughout the township that have unique or special natural features. This site is unique in that it contains one of the highest elevations in Ingham County – the ridgeline is either part of a lateral moraine or possibly an esker. The preserve has mature woodland along the crest of the ridge and is ecologically diverse with many large oaks, maples and cherries. The property contains an existing wetland mitigation site.

In early May Meridian Parks and Land Management Coordinator Jane Greenway, Assistant Park Naturalist Nicholas Sanchez and I walked part of the land preserve to check on its condition. We saw some black plastic construction drain pipes, litter, and yard waste. Invasive species that should be removed are oriental bittersweet, autumn olive, phragmites, common buckthorn, multi-flora rose, and honeysuckle. We talked about a need for a Township sign that would indicate Natural Area, and a chain link fence to prevent illegal dumping of yard waste.

We would very much like to enlist the help of neighborhood residents to become stewards of the preserve. Who better to preserve an area than its residents? This means you would keep an eye on the preserve, and work with us to remove litter, waste, and invasive species. Removal of invasive species allows for native species to return and flourish. And you will enjoy this natural feature of your neighborhood! We would be pleased to partner with you for work days.

Please contact us for more information and if you are interested in helping in any way.

*Margo K. Smith
Member, Meridian Township Land Preservation Advisory board
smithmk@msu.edu<<mailto:smithmk@msu.edu>>
Jane Greenway,
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Nicholas Sanchez sanchez@meridian.mi.us<<mailto:sanchez@meridian.mi.us>>*

c. Land Preservation Names

Board Member Brixie asked to have this item as a topic of discussing on a future agenda.

11. Public Comment

None

12. Closed Session

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER MAYES SECONDED, TO MOVE INTO CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS LAND ACQUISITION ITEMS.

ROLL CALL

AYES: MARGO SMITH, FRANK HATFIELD, JIM KIELBASO, JULIE BRIXIE, JON MAYES, ROLAND HARMES, ROBERT RUSCH, MARK STEPHENS

NAYS: NONE

The Board moved into closed session at 7:42 pm.

BOARD MEMBER SMITH MOVED, BOARD MEMBER RUSCH SECONDED, TO MOVE OUT OF CLOSED SESSION.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: MARK STEPHENS, ROLAND HARMES, JON MAYES, JULIE BRIXIE, JIM KIELBASO, FRANK HATFIELD, MARGO SMITH

NAYS: NONE

The Board returned to open session at 7:57 pm.

13. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 pm.