



CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
PARK COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Location: Service Center Building
Okemos, MI 48864

DATE: April 9, 2019

PRESENT: Commissioners Stephens, Van Antwerp, Schaetzl and McDonald

EXCUSED: Commissioner Lick

STAFF: LuAnn Maisner, Director of Parks and Recreation

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair McDonald called the regular meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Stephens moved TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS WRITTEN. Seconded by Commissioner Schaetzl.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 12, 2019 Regular Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Schaetzl MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 12, 2019 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS SUBMITTED. Seconded by Commissioner Van Antwerp.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Items to/from the Public

None

B. Commission Information

1. Press Releases:

A. Preschoolers Discover Turtles – Preschool Science Exploration Class Investigates Turtles

B. Bird Watching in Meridian Township Parks – Capital Area Audubon Leading Walks at Local Parks

C. Explore Nature Open House part of the MSU Science Festival – Harris Nature Center Open House Spotlights Nature Exploration Area

- D. New Interpretive Signs Arrive at the Harris Nature Center – Boulder Garden Enhanced by Interpretive Signs
- E. Chipmunk Story Time at the Harris Nature Center – Chicory Chipmunk presents “Counting Nature”
- F. Howl at the Moon – Guided Evening Walk for People and Dogs
- C. Staff Inquiries/Response
None

Items distributed at Meeting:

- A. Items to/from the Public
 - 1. From: Ingham County Drain Commissioner’s Office; RE: Press Release – Controlled/Prescribed Burn Toward Gardens Neighborhood
- B. Commission Information
 - 1. Press Releases:
 - A. Meridian Township Partners with Michigan Audubon to Host a Purple Martin Colony – Purple Martin Colony Installation and Education Session
 - B. Spring Walkabout – Harris Nature Center holding a guided walk
 - C. Animal Babies Campfire – Spring campfire at the Harris Nature Center
 - D. Harris Nature Center Encourages Stewardship – Celebrate Arbor Day by Volunteering at a Park
- C. Staff Inquiries/Response
 - 1. From: Kelsey Dillon; RE: Oak Wilk Workshop Summary

Commissioner Stephens moved TO ACCEPT AND PLACE THE ITEMS OF COMMUNICATION ON FILE. Seconded by Commissioner Schaetzl.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. ACTION ITEMS

A. Wonch Park Mitigation Plan

Background

The Elevation Okemos development is proposing to enclose 389 feet of the Smith Consolidated Drain within that property to facilitate the approved final site plan. In accordance with state and federal laws, the applicant must offset the potential impacts created with the enclosure by providing stream mitigation. The offsetting stream mitigation must improve the functionality of an existing impaired or degraded stream across several categories. Previous efforts to perform the mitigation on site have not been successful, mainly due to the constraints the Ingham County Drain Commissioner’s office has in working with the MDEQ.

We met several times with Township staff looking for suitable sites for mitigation on Township owned parcels and Wonch and Ferguson Parks appeared the most viable. With Township approval, we explored the potential use of these parks to fulfill the mitigation requirements. MDEQ has agreed that the Red Cedar River in these parks is degraded and making improvements would generate the needed functional enhancements. Additional details and explanation are attached in our October 23, 2018 Memo to MDEQ.

Proposal

We have surveyed this stretch of the river, performed our technical review, and generated an overall Master Plan for the area (attached). In general, the proposed work includes making geometric changes to the river (namely reducing the low flow width), softening shorelines, removing log jams, providing in stream structures to move the energy away from the steep and eroding valley wall, stabilizing active erosion areas, protecting the existing sanitary sewer and manhole, and clearing and grading the inner bank for stabilization and river access. All woody materials removed would eventually be used to naturally stabilize the shoreline. Once the Ingham County Road Department (ICRD) completes their bridge project, access from one park to the other along the river may be available. These improvements fit perfectly with the Township's Parks and Recreation Master Plan goals and objectives.

Considering the upcoming ICRD bridge project, critical need to protect the sanitary sewer and manhole, and discussions with Township staff, we felt that proceeding with the Wonch Park portion of the project made the most sense. Further, the scope and scale of the mitigation requirements from Elevation do not cover the full Master Plan.

At this time, Phase 1 of the improvements proposed by Elevation include building three (3) in stream structures, protecting the sanitary sewer and manhole, and clearing and grading the inner bank. As noted above, all vegetative materials would be stockpiled and made available for reuse in restoring the south side of the river at a later date. We have discussed this phase with MDEQ, but still need to confirm the exact limits of restoration. Plans showing the proposed Phase 1 Improvements were distributed.

Impacts to the Park

The long-term benefits to the park include the protection of the sanitary system, a more stable river reach, reduced erosion, protection against continued loss of the valley wall, access to the river, a better view of and options to engage with the river, and possibly leveraging this work for future phases.

These benefits are not without impacts. Short-term typical construction impacts will be necessary to build the work. This work should be done by closing this portion of the park, the smaller parking lot, and a portion of the trail (due to proximity to the work zone). The remainder of the park can stay open. In stream erosion, protective measures will be installed, but this type of work usually stirs up the water. The most visible change will be the removal of a significant portion of the vegetation between the trail and the river. There are several large and healthy trees, which we will work around, but the area has a number of trees leaning over the river, which will eventually fall, some dead or dying trees, and some dense but smaller understory trees. These will be removed and used for restoration at a later time. To correct the river dimensions, improve stability, and provide construction and permanent access to the river, removal of this vegetation is unavoidable.

Overall, a construction window of 2-3 months would be needed and ideally be in the late summer or early fall when flows in the river are at their lowest. However, this may need to be phased or shifted to meet MDEQ and MDNR restrictions.

Protection of the Mitigation Work

To ensure the mitigation work is left in place and not altered or removed, MDEQ requires restrictive covenants be placed on the property in the form of a Conservation Easement or

Agreement. We will need to explore this further with Township staff and MDEQ, but some form of protection over the improvements will be needed.

The Commissioners discussed this proposal and agreed by consensus that they approved of the above outlined master plan. They asked Mr. Burton to share this plan with the Ingham County Road Department as part of the Environmental Assessment for the upcoming bridge replacement project. The Commissioners asked Director Maisner to draft a resolution for consideration at the May regular meeting. The Commissioners also asked for additional details when they become available regarding streambank stabilization method to protect the park from erosion; location for stockpiling of trees; who would actually perform future work on the south bank of the river; and when.

B. Dog Park Administration and Fee Proposal

The Meridian Township small and large dog parks are set to open in 2019. At the March 12, 2019 Park Commission meeting, Commissioners asked staff to do additional research on the fee control systems. A poll was sent out through the Meridian Parks and Recreation Facebook page (and shared to the Friends of the Meridian Dog Park group) asking the community whether they would like an access control system with a fee or no control and no fee. The response was about 55% for a fee and 45% against a control system with a fee. Comments included the need for license and vaccination verification and some felt the fee was too high and others were happy with the fee.

Data gathered from other communities with dog parks showed that a fee with a control system allows for better management of the dog park when issues arise. It also provides funds to ensure the dog park is well maintained and programmed. In addition, there are other dog parks locally that are open for no fee (East Lansing and DeWitt). All Meridian Township Parks and Land Preserves welcome dogs while leashed.

Staff recommends the following fees for both dog parks:

Resident Fee:

\$20 for first dog, \$15 for the second dog

Non-resident Fee:

\$35 for first dog, \$20 for the second dog

Commissioner Van Antwerp moved TO SUPPORT THE ADOPTION OF A FEE SCHEDULE FOR DOG PARK USERS AS FOLLOWS: RESIDENT, \$20 FOR ONE DOG AND \$15 FOR A SECOND DOG, AND NON-RESIDENT, \$35 FOR ONE DOG AND \$20 FOR A SECOND DOG. ANNUAL FEES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR MONITORING USE AND USERS, FUNDING THE ASSIGNED FOB, AND TO ASSIST IN OFFSETTING MAINTENANCE COSTS. A CHECKBOX WILL BE ADDED TO THE APPLICATION TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO A SCHOLARSHIP FUND TO ASSIST LOW INCOME DOG OWNERS. Seconded by Commissioner Stephens.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

None

8. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

9. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- A. Property Donation - TJ Acquisitions donated 9 acres adjacent to Hillbrook Park. closed 3-26-19
- B. Property Transfer Agreement with MilMar Mall, LLC for 2.43 Acres on Central Park Drive closed on 4-1-19.
- C. Farmers' Market Manager – current Market Manager, Corey Patrick submitted his letter of Resignation effective April 23. A new manager has been hired, Jackie Pawluk, who also manages the DeWitt Farmers Market. She will begin her duties on April 22. The final indoor Winter Market date is Saturday, April 20. The outdoor spring season begins Saturday, May 4 from 8am-2pm.
- D. Towner Road Park Neighbor – has contacted us to request funds from us to help remediate the water retention in his front yard. He is claiming that the flooding was caused from development of the Park.
- E. Project Update – HNC Pavilion and Restroom – Viridis Design Group provided a preliminary site plan and cost estimates for the project. Staff of the Harris Nature Center also wanted to have and overlook constructed as part of this project with funding assistance from the HNC Foundation and the Capital Region Community Foundation. Adding this scope to two grant funded projects at this time may make things too confusing when submitting for reimbursements therefore, it may be may we need to make it a separate project.
- F. Project Update – Central Park Improvements- we received a draft of the plans and bid documents this week and they are under review by staff.
- G. Project Update – Marketplace on the Green final site plans and bid specs are being completed now for bidding in May.
- H. Oak Wilt Kelsey attended a workshop yesterday regarding Oak Wilt. Her report is included in communications.
- I. Large Dog Park – The trees have been cleared and the poison ivy treated. The rest of the park will be developed in conjunction with the Central Meridian Regional Trail Connector.
- J. Small Dog Park - The electricity and fob system have been ordered and are scheduled for installation later this month. We are targeting a mid-May grand opening.
- K. Historical Village Barnes House – Earlier this year, Brad Brogren, president of the Friends of Historic Meridian reported that they were looking into re-siding three sides of the structure at a cost of approximately \$40,000. After additional research, I think they have concluded that the existing siding could be primed and painted at a cost of \$5,000.
- L. Towar Woods Land Preserve – Last Sunday, Park Naturalist Kelsey Dillon lead a group of Scouts from Haslett on a trash pick-up event where they collected 10 large bags of trash.
- M. Love a Park Day – Saturday, May 18 at 9:30am at Hillbrook Park. Ferguson and North Meridian.
- N. Parks and Grounds Maintenance Staff have been hard at work preparing the parks for youth soccer, lacrosse and youth baseball practices. Summer seasonals are starting now through early May.

10. OTHER MATTERS AND COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

- A. Commissioner Comments' - None

B. Events Calendar:

1. April 27: Spring Recycling, Chippewa Middle School Parking Lot, 9 am – 2 pm
2. May 4: HNC Native Plant Sale and Fundraiser, 9 am -1 pm
3. May 7: Evening Wildflower Walk, Harris Nature Center, 7 – 8 pm
4. May 10: Mother’s Day Tea & Bunch, Meridian Senior Center, 10:30-12:30 pm
5. May 17: Meridian Garden Club Annual Plant Sale, Central Park Pavilion, 9 am – 2 pm
6. May 18: Love a Park Day, Hillbrook and Ferguson Parks, 9:30 am – 12 pm
7. May 29: Senior Health & Fitness Day, Wonch Park, 11 am – 1 pm

- C. Next Park Commission Meeting – Tuesday, May 14, 6 pm work session, 7 pm regular meeting in the Township Hall

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair McDonald adjourned the meeting at 8:31 pm.

- 12. NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, May 14, 2019**, 6 pm work session, 7 pm regular meeting in the Town Hall Room, Meridian Municipal Building, 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos. This will be a televised meeting.