

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2016  
6 PM – SERVICE CENTER

Members Present: Julie Brixie, Roland Harmes, Frank Hatfield James Kielbaso, Yu Man Lee, Jon Mayes

Members Absent: Margo Smith, Mark Stephens

Staff: Jane Greenway, Parks and Land Management Coordinator; Kelsey Dillon, Land Stewardship Assistant; Robin Faust, Administrative Assistant II

Others: Ingham County Deputy Drain Commissioner Carla Close, Spicer Group representative James Ensign, Tom Rapaskey, Doug Gowan, Mark Hooper, Michael McDonald

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chair Kielbaso called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

2. Approve Agenda

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER LEE SECONDED, TO ACCEPT THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

3. Public Remarks

Deputy Drain Commissioner Clos distributed and summarized information on the proposed maintenance activities that will occur on the Smith Consolidated Drain, specifically within and near the Meridian Charter Township Sower Woods Land Preserve. Maintenance work proposed will include removal of brush and saplings that have established on the channel banks within the last decade since this type of maintenance was last performed. She asked for the LPAB's input.

Discussion:

- Asked to have the area flagged to allow for Board Members to review the area
- Bank stabilization and erosion repair will be included in the scope of work
- Asked to schedule a site visit to walk the area within the next two weeks
- This drain was last maintained 12 years ago

- Bank stabilization will be on the west and north sides of the drain; will remove dead and fallen trees; will utilize the current corridor for maintenance access
- Four years ago the sewer maintenance was accomplished in this area and believes there may have been recent cleaning
- The work area of the drain will terminate at Bennett Road
- There will be no excavation. There will be removal of dead trees; erosion repair will be completed with natural stone such as used in Red Cedar Glen Land Preserve project; will use native mix for planting
- There is no assessment to public lands from Ingham County Drain Commissioner
- Will perform the work in the most sensitive way possible; will use the same protocols as used in the Red Cedar Glen Land Preserve project
- Asked to see the list of seed mix
- Work will be completed within the easement area; approximately 40 feet on either side of the centerline; with minimum damage to the flora

4. Public Hearing

a. Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant Program, Acquisition

- Chair Kielbaso declared the public hearing open at 6:17 pm.
- Staff presents project overview

**Project Description**

Acquisition of 89 acres of greenspace known as the "Ponderosa Parcel"

**Justification**

- ✓ Access points
- ✓ Utilize the corridor
- ✓ Wetlands
- ✓ Varying topography
- ✓ Green space
- ✓ Adjacent to Red Cedar Natural Area and Legg Park

**Project Design**

- Enhance wildlife corridors
- Enhance fishing corridors
- Enhance trail connections

**Project Cost:**

Estimated project cost: \$1.3 million including closing costs

Required local match: Minimum 25%, increased match equals greater points,  
Land Preservation Advisory Board match 50% including donation of \$136,000  
DNR Grant amount:

- Staff acknowledges received items of communication
  - ✓ Legal Notice was placed in the Towne Courier on February 28 and March 6, 2016.
  - ✓ Notification of the public hearing was sent to all neighbors within 500 feet of the parcels
  - ✓ Received a letter of support from Chad Fedewa, Wildlife Biologist, DNR Wildlife Division
  - ✓ Received an email communication of support from Land Preservation Advisory Board Member/Park Commission Liaison Mark Stephens
  - ✓ Received a letter of support from J. James Kielbaso, Ph.D.
  - ✓ Received an email communication of support from Nathaniel Ostrom
  - ✓ Received letter of support from Thomas Repaskey
  
- Public Comment
  - ✓ Thomas Repaskey, Okemos, lives adjacent to the parcel and is in support of its preservation.
  - ✓ Mark Hooper, Stagecoach Drive, Okemos, lives adjacent to the parcel, lived in the area since 1981, has attended various meetings on Ember Oaks and recalls former Township Board Trustee and Park Commissioner Ted Black gave testimony on the forest and wildlife in this area and the need for its preservation in this area of the Township. He suggested opening up the area for a pedestrian and bicycle trail connecting from Legg Park to Jolly Road to Ember Oaks to this parcel. If this area remains undeveloped, it will maintain the watershed and avoid water damage to this area of the Township.
  - ✓ Michael McDonald, Wood Valley Road, Haslett, supports the proposed grant application to the Land and Water Trust Fund and supports the use of these funds to preserve and support preserving green space. He supports the LPAB proposed local match of more than 25% and suggested contacting the Harris Nature Center for a letter of support outlining wildlife, especially the salmon in this area.
  - ✓ Doug Gowan, part owner of the parcel, stated he is pleased to have this parcel preserved for future generations. He and others have enjoyed the property for many years and knows Mr. Forsberg, who recently passed away, also wished to have this area preserved instead of developed.
  
- Commissioners comment
  - ✓ Although the application is completed online, staff will print a copy for Members to review
  - ✓ The LPAB recommends the grant application submission but it is the Township Board who submits the application; the grant application was noticed at a previous Township Board meeting and is on its next agenda for action
  - ✓ The grant will include an outline of the setbacks from the railroad, easements, drains, etc.; a wetland and greenspace report

- ✓ The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will evaluate the proposed purchase after the grant application is submitted; negotiations will be handled after the review of the appraisals by the DNR
- ✓ If the seven acres is removed there will be only one access
- ✓ Seller will need to go through a split of the seven acres from one of the parcels if the purchase is completed
- ✓ Ember Oaks development has a proposed plan illustrating a road/trail which would be another potential access to the far west of the parcel
- ✓ Voiced concern with the comps used by the current owner in the appraisal
- ✓ The cul-de-sac roadway is owned by Ingham County Road Department and there is a 66 foot easement
- ✓ Questioned if a boardwalk could be constructed under the railroad (does not believe so)
- ✓ Attributes of the land is diversity of topography and geomorphology, has hills, little pockets to walk into; wide variety of trees; streams; meadows; close proximity to Red Cedar Natural Area and Legg Park; creates a large expansion of land for perpetuity; different forests including hardwoods; is attractive area to live in; would be a jewel for the Township preserves; ranked high during the ranking system walks

- Chair Kielbaso declared the public hearing closed at 6:55 pm.

5. Approve Minutes

a. February 10, 2016

- ✓ Page 5, #12, Closed Session, correct spelling of acquisition
- ✓ Page 5, #12, Closed Session, second motion, add "moved" after "Mayes"

BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD MOVED, BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 10, 2016 MINUTES AS AMENDED. Voice vote. Motion passed.

6. Communications

- Emails:
  - ✓ From: Member Hatfield, RE: wrong sign in Red Cedar Glen Preserve
  - ✓ From: Member Hatfield, RE: ATV in Red Cedar Glen

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

7. Old Business

None

8. New Business

a. Natural Resources Trust Fund Program, Acquisition Grant Request

Coordinator Greenway distributed a communication from DNR Grant Coordinator Tamara Jorkasky and a proposed resolution of support for the grant submission. The new proposed resolution a 55% total match.

Discussion:

- Grant points are awarded based on the Township's Median Household Income which is in the upper 1/3 base level which means to get 20 points will need a local match percentage up to 55%
- Closing costs and taxes may be approximately \$15,000
- Agree with an amount of \$1 million for the purchase price and include the closing costs and donation as part of the total purchase price
- Everything at this point is an estimate; LPAB local match at \$500,000; donation at \$136,000, equaling \$514,900
- Will be requesting a local match of 55%, not 46%
- This will be a good grant application with a higher point ratio
- The grant award could be less than asking price; the award is based on the evaluation of the appraisals

The following resolution was offered by Board Member Julie Brixie and supported by Board Member Yu Man Lee:

WHEREAS, the Land Preservation Program was established in 2000 to protect, preserve and enhance Meridian Township's open spaces, natural features, natural habitats and water quality for future generations; and

WHEREAS, the Land Preservation Advisory Board is interested in the continued improvement of Meridian Township's Land Preservation Program; and

WHEREAS, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources accepts grant requests from local units of government to assist in the acquisition or development of recreation properties; and

WHEREAS, Meridian Township has prepared a grant application for submission to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for the acquisition of property, parcel numbers 33-02-02-35-426-006; 33-02-02-35-200-012, which will provide for the protection of land for its environmental importance and scenic beauty; and

WHEREAS, the grant request is outlined and justified in the 2011-2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan adopted by the Meridian Township Board and Park Commission, and is on file with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources; and

WHEREAS, the acquisition of natural areas supports Township Board Policy 1.1,2; 1.2,5; 1.3,2; and 1.3,5.

WHEREAS, this grant request was open to public review on March 9, 2016 and found to be acceptable;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD OF THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN, INGHAM COUNTY, MICHIGAN, as follows:

To support submission of a grant application titled Ponderosa Land Preserve to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for an estimated total project cost of \$1,150,900 for the acquisition of property with parcel numbers: 33-02-02-35-426-006; 33-02-02-35-200-012, Okemos, Michigan. Meridian Charter Township is requesting \$514,900 from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. Meridian Charter Township has made a financial commitment to the project in the amount of \$636,000 (46%) consisting of \$136,000 in land donation and \$500,000 from the Land Preservation Millage.

Discussion:

- Need the amendment motion to remove the seven acres and the grant is for the proposed purchase of 89 acres

BOARD MEMBER MAYES OFFERED THE FOLLOWING FRIENDLY AMENDMENT:

- 4<sup>TH</sup> WHEREAS, changed to: WHEREAS, Meridian Township has prepared a grant application for submission to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for the acquisition of *approximately 89 acres* of property, parcel number *33-02-02-35-200-012 and part of parcel number 33-02-02-35-426-006 (see Exhibit A)*; which will provide for the protection of land for its environmental importance and scenic beauty; and
- In NOW, THEREFORE motion, change percentage from 46% to 55%

Friendly Amendment accepted by Maker and Supporter of the Resolution.

ADOPTED:

YEAS: Yu Man Lee, Julie Brixie, Roland Harmes, Jon Mayes, James Kielbaso, Frank Hatfield,

NAYS: None

The resolution passed.

9. Land Management Coordinator and Land Stewardship Assistant Report

Highlights include:

- Sturk Preserve: Working with Vern Stephens, Designs by Nature, on late April planting
- MSU Global Day of Service: researching projects for submission for their service day on April 16
- Lake Lansing North deer exclosures: will continue monitoring activities this June
- Towar Woods: ordered new dibble bars to assist with tree planting; herbicide treatment with volunteers; planning a clear cut with Outdoor Expressions when weather permits; developing a map for the area
- Davis/Foster Preserve: addressing concerns about the upcoming prescribed burn; received four bids; will tabulate later in the week
- Signage: designing new land preserve bollards for preserve signage; Reviewed Trail Marker Posts; suggested moving from recommendation #3 to #5; reduce “no” signs to the horse, ATV and fire; QR Code is an important link and when accessed, can be tracked by staff; important to keep dog on leash
- “Why Not to Dump Yard Waste” article submitted to HOM-TV; important to stop residents from encroaching and dumping
- Ordered new tree identification tags
- Would like to find “leaders” for each of the preserves such as Dave Caszatt and establish clean up dates

10. Other

a. Open Meetings Act

Board Member Brixie spoke on the importance of avoiding the use of the “reply all” feature to avoid creating a deliberation which is in violation of the open meetings act.

b. Greenspace Map Overlay

Coordinator Greenway distributed a copy of the greenspace map Associate Planner Harmony Gmazel is working on. When completed, a larger version will be distributed to members.

11. Public Comment

None

12. Announcements

None

13. Closed Session

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD SECONDED, TO ENTER INTO CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS ACQUISITION ISSUES.

ROLL CALL:

YEAS: Yu Man Lee, Julie Brixie, Roland Harmes, Jon Mayes, James Kielbaso,  
Frank Hatfield,

NAYS: None

The Land Preservation Advisory Board entered into closed session at 8:02 pm.

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE, BOARD MEMBER MAYES SECONDED, TO RETURN TO OPEN SESSION.

Roll Call:

AYES: Yu Man Lee, Julie Brixie, Jon Mayes, Roland Harmes, James  
Kielbaso, Frank Hatfield

NAYES: None

The Land Preservation Advisory Board returned to open session at 8:31 pm.

Members briefly discussed the need for additional management activities in the land preserves and asked staff to explore fees for contracting out some of the services and need to avoid violation of the Labor Act.

13. Adjournment

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER MAYES SECONDED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 pm.