

LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
HELD AT THE TOWNSHIP HALL

January 15, 2020
Regular Meeting
6:00 P.M. at Township Hall

ARTICLE I. CALL TO ORDER

Tom Shuff called the regular Parks & Recreation Commission meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Karen Simmons, Tom Shuff, Kathleen Dearborn,
Ellen Fitch, Dick Becker
MEMBERS ABSENT: None
STAFF PRESENT: Al Meshkin – Township Manager
Diane Ybarra – Recording Secretary

ARTICLE II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Simmons seconded by Dearborn to approve the November 20, 2019 minutes as written. Shuff called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE III. APPROVAL OF TREASURER’S REPORT

The bills to be paid as of December 2019 were reviewed. Maintenance: Jon’s To Go - \$369.25; Contracted Services: John Kunkel - \$150.00; Electricity: Consumers Energy - \$149.45; Salaries: Robert Jerow - \$175.00; Taxes: \$13.38.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Simmons and seconded by Dearborn to approve the Treasurer’s Reports as submitted for the month of December.**

Shuff asked if the sheriff invoice will be ongoing and Meshkin responded that it will be based on use, however the parking tickets written almost cover the cost of the deputies.

Shuff called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED

ARTICLE IV. TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORTS

- a. Meshkin said the Township Board did not meet in January.

ARTICLE V. STAFF REPORTS – MESHKIN

- a. Meshkin said Brett has been clearing the old township hall site; visits other parks weather permitting.

ARTICLE VI. HUYSER CARETAKER REPORT - CIRCO

Sirco said in the past there was a post near the bridge in the blueberry field and asked that the post be put back in place to deter cars from going over the bridge. She also suggested a sign be installed to state that no cars are allowed in that area. Meshkin will ask Brett to look into this concern.

ARTICLE VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. WELCOMING SIGNS

Shuff asked the commissioners comment on the Frankfort Beach sign submitted by Dearborn. Shuff supported this type of sign for Laketown Beach. Simmons suggested putting effort into creating a template with basic information for each park. Dearborn volunteered to draft a template and suggestions for each park specific.

ARTICLE VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. FY 2020-21 BUDGET

Meshkin reviewed the proposed budget. Meshkin spoke to the concept of the Parks Commission sponsoring the Winter Fest held at the Felt Mansion which is usually funded by the Township Board. It would create awareness for the Parks Commission’s activities. Patty Meyer coordinates the entire event.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Dearborn and seconded by Becker to approve the sponsorship of the Winter Fest. Shuff called for a vote on the motion – UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

Meshkin noted other opportunities that the Township currently funds that could be tied to the Parks Commission in the future.

Meshkin reviewed the new sign expenses; park surveillance for those wired and future discussion regarding movement of the Old Township Hall building which will not be done

in 2020 however plans should begin being discussed. Dearborn asked if there will be a basement under the structure and Meshkin said it would be a crawlspace. The estimated cost to move the building is more than \$15,000. Shuff feels the Wi-Fi and cameras for surveillance are a priority. The bike path engineering is for the engineering cost only for the reconstruction of the path on 62nd north of 147th. The actual repair work would occur in 2021-22. There are also dollars in that \$50,000 for the Blue Star Trail. Becker asked if the match money in Saugatuck for their trail was related to this and Meshkin said it is not. The Beeline Trail and the Township Hall Park bonds were both paid off this past year.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Becker and seconded by Simmons to approve for recommendation to the Township Board the proposed Parks Commission 2020-2021 Budget. Shuff called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

B. DOGS AT SANCTUARY WOODS

Shuff stated that he was recently at the park and witnessed walkers with dogs off their leashes. Meshkin suggested installing signs that would educate visitors on the owl habitat and why dogs should be kept leashed. Dearborn will draft signs and forward to the commissioners.

C. PARKS MILLAGE DISCUSSION

Shuff asked when the last attempt was made for a millage and Meshkin said it may have been the late 90's. Meshkin said it takes a lot of preparation to take this to the voters. Last year the taxable value was approximately \$440,000,000 and this year would be closer to \$450,000,000. The commissioners must decide how much to ask for and what the money would be spent on. What would be done that is not being done today, i.e., working restrooms in each park. Each park would require different types of restrooms including water and sewer factors. Meshkin suggests that the commissioners begin the prep work in 2020 for a 2021 opportunity. Fitch mentioned the list of items in the 5-year plan as a starting point for discussion. Fitch suggested improved signage and trail markers done by a professional organization. Simmons suggested the signs at Farview referencing who maintains the trails should be updated. Meshkin said a petition could be done to create awareness. Shuff asked the commissioners to prepare a list of their top five priorities for the parks for discussion at the next meeting. The length of the millage must also be considered and Meshkin suggested a five-year millage. Becker asked what a quarter mil would cost the average property owner and Meshkin said roughly \$35 per year. Fitch spoke to the factors needed to create the marketing. She suggested benchmarking other townships that have successfully completed such a project.

Shuff asked that Brett look at the drive and deadwood at Farview Park. Shuff asked if we need a monthly report on each park, that each commissioner would be responsible. Meshkin will have Brett come to the meetings more frequently to report.

ARTICLE IX. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Jeremy Van Hoeven of 2406 Vander Muelen asked about the signage near Laketown Beach regarding the parking capacity. The parking gets out of hand when the deputies are not available for surveillance. He suggested signage directing people to Shore Acres where there is ample parking and much more beach frontage. Simmons supported the idea to include the suggestion in the signage. Van Hoeven asked what the intention is for the recently purchased lots. Meshkin said work is still being done with King to acquire his lots. The recently purchased lots would be for picnic and restroom area but not additional parking. The township is also working with the road commission on better signage. A request has also been made to the Allegan County Sheriff for more support in the summer. Van Hoeven suggested getting the surveys to residents that live closer to the parks. Shuff suggested incorporating visiting some of the neighbors when the parks surveys are being done. Simmons asked if there is an informal survey that could be done in the newsletter. Sall said a formal survey must be done before the renewal of each 5-Year Parks Plan. The last one was done in 2018 so the next updated plan is due in 2023.

Tom O'Neill of 667 Halcyon thanked the commissioners for the work they have done at Laketown Beach. He asked who would monitor the surveillance cameras at the beach. Meshkin said it will be for the township to review but the sheriff department will also have access.

ARTICLE X. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Simmons and seconded by Dearborn to adjourn the meeting at 7:02p.m. Shuff called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED