

PROPOSED MINUTES
LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
AT
TOWNSHIP HALL

May 20, 2015

ARTICLE I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Michelle Sall called the regular Parks & Recreation Commission meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chuck Strabbing, Michelle Sall, Jim Johnson
MEMBERS ABSENT: Bill Snyder, Karen Simmons
STAFF PRESENT: Al Meshkin – Township Manager
Diane Ybarra – Recording Secretary

ARTICLE II. CITIZEN COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Michelle Sall commented on the email Al Meshkin forwarded from a concerned citizen regarding the overgrowth of the invasive mustard weed at Sanctuary Woods.

An email from Jason Schrottenboer was forwarded regarding the progress being made to clear and repair the stairs at Laketown Beach. There were also several nice photographs of volunteers working at the beach to assist with the project. Michelle Sall commented on the recent article and photograph published in the Holland Sentinel describing the work being done. Jim Johnson stated that he had visited the beach and felt it still needed a lot of work in spite of what had been done. Al Meshkin provided background on the park stating the current steps are at least twenty years old and it is time to strategize for the future. It may be possible to get a grant to make future improvements. Jim asked if a quote has ever been obtained to install a tunnel through the dune instead of trying to go over it. Al responded that a quote has not been obtained but the idea had been explored in the past. Jim asked where the sand is placed when it is being cleared and Al responded off to the sides, typically to the east. Chuck Strabbing said a lot of the sand is thrown down the dune. Jim asked if there might be any kind of machine that could be used to pipe sand further away. Al said there is a machine capable of throwing gravel. The machine is several hundred pounds that would have to be airlifted onto the dune. Al did have a conversation with Neil King, owner of the in holding property that would be beneficial to purchase for the dune. Jim asked if it would make sense to plant more dune grass and Chuck stated that Jason Schrottenboer has transplanted grass each year but it has been about 8 years since the major planting had been done.

ARTICLE III. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approval of Minutes

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Chuck Strabbing and seconded by Jim Johnson to approve the April 15, 2015 minutes as written. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE IV. APPROVAL OF TREASURER’S REPORT

Michelle Sall reviewed the bills to be paid as of April 2015. Maintenance: Heavener Property Services - \$7,731.00, Chef Container - \$117.37, Gary Molengraff - \$240.00; Salaries: Robert Jerow - \$155.00, Michelle Sall - \$150.00, Karen Simmons - \$120.00, Bill Snyder - \$140.00, Chuck Strabbing - \$120.00; Supplies: Tumaric - \$457.54, Access Display Group - \$396.00; Electricity: \$22.61.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Chuck Strabbing and seconded by Jim Johnson to approve the Treasurer’s Report as submitted. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE V. TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORT – Jim Johnson

Jim Johnson reported that there was very favorable conversation around retiring Commissioner Chuck Strabbing. The new fire chief, Doug Den Bleyker was also introduced at the meeting.

ARTICLE VI. TOWNSHIP STAFF REPORTS – AL MESHKIN

Al Meshkin stated that Dan Williams is doing well but there are issues with the maintenance truck. Dan has started to repair the stairs at Sanctuary Woods. He has been at all parks doing clean-up work as the season begins. Al asked that commissioners submit to him any work requests for the parks and he will communicate to Dan. The port’ o’ potty and trash receptacle is in place at the Township Recreation Park. The striping equipment has been purchased and Dan has used it in the ball field. The field is getting a lot of use by Hamilton and Saugatuck; there are a lot of reservations being made by various ball clubs. The pavilion is also being reserved for several dates throughout the summer. Al asked for approval to purchase five \$100 picnic tables, four to be used at the Recreation Park and one for Farview Park. In the future more equipment will be needed to properly rake and maintain the ball diamond. A small tractor with a rake attachment would be beneficial as its use increases. The Township Board approved the low bid for the parking lot asphalt resurfacing including an extension to the north and west. The work will be done after the underground sprinkler work is done which could be toward the end of the summer based on contractor availability.

Jim Johnson said the new pavement on 66th Street behind the Felt Mansion is very nice. Al stated the same contractor Zeeland Blacktop will be used for the parking lot.

Chuck Strabbing asked if we will supply bats or balls for the ball park. Al said no, only equipment for maintaining the ball field, particularly for the infield.

Al said he received a call from a resident stating Farview Park looked very good. Dan has begun to spread bark in the park as well. Michelle stated she feels that the brush might need to be pulled back at Farview. Al asked for specific feedback when the commissioners see work that should be done in the parks. Chuck added almost every year we've worked at Farview for Day of Caring.

Jim reported that the port' o' potty at Laketown Beach looks like it has been moved off the pad and the bolts have been loosened. Al said we don't spend a lot of time bolting it because it is regularly vandalized.

ARTICLE VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. PARK SURVEY

Michelle provided a working draft of the park survey in hard copy and stated it was also available in electronic form. The draft for the new survey is more free response than prescriptive. She asked that the commissioners review and provide feedback in order to have it ready for the fall newsletter as the next 5-year plan is due in 2018. Al stated this format will result in lower participation but more meaningful responses. Jim suggested combining the two types of questions to reach a broader population and perhaps a higher response rate. Al asked Michelle to send him the final version electronically and he will then create a fillable pdf form to be put on the township website. Michelle will send this draft to those not present at tonight's meeting.

B. BUTTERFLY PROJECT

Michelle Sall opened discussion for the Butterfly Project. Al Meshkin said he will have some milkweed seed this fall and more should be available from the plants growing on the east side of the Felt Mansion. Jim Johnson added that he has also been researching a source for the seeds. The planting of the milkweed will draw the Monarch butterfly population. It was decided the milkweed seeds would be planted in several of the parks and Al will advise Dan Williams why they are being planted and that they should not be considered an invasive weed. Jim added that he had received an email from Wendy Van Huis supporting the project. Al suggested an article be added to the July newsletter to solicit volunteers for the fall seeding.

C. MEMORIAL BENCHES

Chuck asked if the bench for Sanctuary Woods has come in yet. Al stated that he has three benches, each weighing approximately 250 pounds, waiting to be put in place. The commissioners must decide where the Den Uyl bench will be placed at Sanctuary Woods. Jim suggested putting it at the base of the staircase for visitors to understand the origin of the park. Al provided the background on the purchase of Sanctuary Woods property and therefore the reason for the bench.

ARTICLE VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. SIGNAGE FOR LAKETOWN BEACH

Jim Johnson suggested placing a sign on 64th Street to indicate the location of Laketown Beach. Al Meshkin said this has been point of discussion for many years. Due to the very limited parking, increasing awareness is not a favored idea.

B. GRAND RAPIDS FRIENDS OF THE PARKS

Jim Johnson commented that he had attended a fundraiser for the Grand Rapids Friends of the Parks and wondered if this concept has ever been considered in Laketown. Or would it be possible to do a fundraiser at the Felt Mansion that would be dedicated to the township parks. Al Meshkin responded that the Felt Mansion has its Friends of the Felt which is a non-profit 501(c)(3). The idea had been considered in the past but there are a lot of steps involved to obtain the non-profit status. The idea of a fundraiser would be possible as long as it is held outside of the peak rental season. Al proposed a parks millage which would generate a considerable amount of revenue. It would require a grassroots effort by committed supporters to engage the township residents to gain their approval. Chuck Strabbing added that some in the township do not support additional funding for parks; some do not understand how the Felt Mansion is maintained. Following discussion, it was agreed that it would be appropriate to add this topic as a question on the parks survey. Jim Johnson will submit draft questions to Michelle Sall.

ARTICLE IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:09 P.M.