

PROPOSED MINUTES  
LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP  
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
HELD AT TOWHNSHIP HALL

June 21, 2017

ARTICLE I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Michelle Sall called the regular Parks & Recreation Commission meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michelle Sall, Jim Johnson, Ryan Bosscher,  
Janice Lozon, Karen Simmons  
MEMBERS ABSENT: None  
STAFF PRESENT: Al Meshkin – Township Manager  
Noah Sall – Deputy Assessor/Deputy Zoning Administrator  
Diane Ybarra – Recording Secretary

ARTICLE II. CITIZEN COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Sherri Sirko of 6379 Hidden Ponds expressed concern regarding dogs at Laketown Beach. She asked that a separate sign be installed advising that dogs are not allowed in the park.

Sall said an email was sent from Lisa Jevens expressing concern that the beach stairs were not being kept clear to which Meshkin provided a response explaining the work that is being done.

ARTICLE III. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approval of Minutes

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Simmons and seconded by Bosscher to approve the May 17, 2017 minutes as written. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

Lozon commented on the question in the minutes regarding whether or not the Michigan Bamboo or Mexican Bamboo are the same as the Japanese Knotweed and confirmed that they are the same invasive species.

#### ARTICLE IV. APPROVAL OF TREASURER'S REPORT

The bills to be paid as of May 2017 were reviewed. Maintenance: Veldhof – \$440.00; Contracted Services: John Kunkel - \$150.00, Robert Jerow \$175.00; Supplies: Campground Signs.com - \$84.75 Electricity: Consumers Energy - \$46.71; Taxes: \$13.38.

Johnson asked about the invoice for the dusk to dawn signs and asked where they would be placed. Meshkin said he purchased six signs and placed them at Sanctuary Woods, Farview Farm, Laketown Beach and Shore Acres. Johnson also questioned the half month on the portable toilet and Meshkin responded it had been put in place when the ball park began to be used.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Simmons and seconded by Lozon to approve the Treasurer's Report as submitted. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

#### ARTICLE V. TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORTS – Sall

- a. Sall reported that there was one question of invasive species at the blueberries that was referred to the MSU report.

#### ARTICLE VI. STAFF REPORTS

- a. Noah Sall stated that he purchased the dock materials for Farview and walked the area for transportation of materials to install the dock. The materials were less expensive than projected.
- b. Meshkin reported that Williams has been clearing graffiti and downed trees in the parks. Lozon asked if there is anything that can be done about graffiti on the trees on the trail at Sanctuary that are painted with large red hearts. Simmons asked if there is a mow schedule for the parks as many are overgrown, specifically Huyser and Farview. Meshkin said it is not done weekly but as needed. Simmons said the trails at Huyser need cutting and Johnson said the grass is tall near the buildings. Meshkin will address the mowing needs. Meshkin said the Youth Connections workers will begin on July 10, 4 hours per day, 3 days per week. Sall said a section of the bike path has buckled and Meshkin has put it on the schedule for the contractor.

## ARTICLE VII. OLD BUSINESS

### A. BEACH

Johnson reported that half the stairs are buried again. Meshkin said up until 1992 there were no steps at all so every trip was a struggle. Schrotenboer has a contract and is doing the best that he can. The best time to redo the stairs is in the winter if the grants come through. Simmons asked for an update on the King property and Meshkin said there is a verbal acknowledgement that King is a willing seller but nothing in writing. Johnson said there is an area where the dune grass is so thick that it is difficult to pass and asked that it be trimmed. Meshkin will have Williams trim it back. Sall said the bike rack is very difficult to reach and might better be placed in an alternate area, perhaps taking one vehicle spot for the bike rack. Following discussion, it was decided that Sall will take pictures of alternate options and present at the next meeting. Meshkin said all the parking spots were surveyed for striping. Johnson commented that the portable toilet at the beach remains graffiti free since it was painted gray last summer.

### B. ADAPTIVE REUSE OF OLD TOWNSHIP HALL

Following discussion it was agreed that this item will be removed from the agenda until further notice.

### C. INVASIVE SPECIES

Lozon reported that she has been working with a consultant Drew Reiner referred by Ottawa County. The consultant said to the trees to the south and west of the park are infested with the hemlock wooly adelgid and he recommended that all trees within 500 feet be treated which would encompass the entire park. The species is most identifiable in the winter season. Sall asked if there is an indication of a cost and Lozon said none was given. One method is to place a packet of treatment at the base of the tree which is good for three years but in order to be successful the surrounding residents would also have to treat their trees. Lozon said it seems the trees back by the subdivision and up on the northwest side of the hill are most affected. One tree by the north bridge is where the consultant found the sample but Lozon said she was unable to locate it. Meshkin said there is a person in Laketown Township from Black River Habitat who specializes in invasive species and wondered if he would be willing to walk Sanctuary Woods and provide a quote for treatment. Lozon said if you spray it must be done every year but the packets are good for 3 years. Johnson said Bayer makes a liquid and crystal treatment available at Menards or Lowes but we would have to have someone show us what trees are affected. Lozon said if you get rid of the mite, the tree would survive so it is hopeful but we should do something fairly soon. There is no grant money available to support the treatment process.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Bosscher and seconded by Simmons for township staff to contact Keith Kluting of Black River Habitat to obtain a quote for**

**identification and treatment of the hemlock wooly invasive species at Sanctuary Woods Park. Sall called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

**D. DOG PARK**

Sall opened for discussion and Simmons asked who owns the property east of Wolters Woods that is being considered a location for the dog park. Meshkin responded Dr. Schloff is the property owner and he is aware that the township is interested in purchasing it so he believes it would be fine for board members to walk the property. Meshkin said grant research can be done but also suggested a land contract option as was done for the Laketown Township Recreation Park property. It may be beneficial for the seller from a tax perspective, additional incentive to sell. If the beach grant is awarded, it could be a very long time before another substantial grant is awarded. Meshkin also discussed the possibility of qualified bank bonds as an option. Simmons said it is something that will have to be planned for and Sall responded that residents have been asking for a dog park since 2012 ranking high on the survey.

**E. PICKLE BALL**

Sall reminded commissioners that the last discussion was whether or not to do the soil boring test. It was determined that the original quote to do the test was too high at approximately \$3500. Johnson said he understood the contractor providing the quote wants a survey along with an exact plan for location of the courts and that is not available at this point. Simmons asked for the estimated cost of the court and Bosscher responded \$30,000 - \$50,000 depending on the materials used. Meshkin suggested the Parks Commission stake a preliminary soil test noting that it should be included in the 5-year recreation plan. Johnson said it should stay on the radar as we have had good input from residents who would like it and it depends on how sophisticated we want to go basic or professional which would up the cost. It continues to grow and Macatawa Legends is converting many of their tennis courts to pickle ball. The Saugatuck courts are also highly used particularly on the week-ends. Following discussion, it was decided that Bosscher and Johnson will mark the 4 corners before the next Parks meeting and Meshkin will instruct Williams to do a soil sampling. It is anticipated that 3600 sf of concrete would be needed plus prep work, fencing and striping. Lozon asked if walkways would have to be put in and Meshkin said it could be over time.

**F. FIVE YEAR RECREATION PLAN UPDATE**

Sall asked for suggestions based on 2012 current for what should be done for 2018. Simmons said wheel chair accessibility at Wolters Woods should be addressed. Meshkin said the Youth Connection workers may be able to put diamond dust or chips and fine to pack it down but keep it permeable. Lozon commented that the wrong material was delivered to Sanctuary Woods for the trails and it did not work. Meshkin will have Williams do a sample material at the beginning of the trail at the north bridge to determine what will work best.

Sall said she reviewed the guidelines at length and ideally you should have several methods to notify the public so the survey was done and a public hearing will be scheduled. Sall suggested hosting a hot dog dinner to roll out the draft of the 5-year plan to residents making the document available for 30 days prior to the next meeting at which time a public hearing would be held. Sall will make the announcement for the hot dog dinner in the July newsletter to be held in August, a public hearing in September, Township Board vote in October and then forward to the DNR. Sall asked that commissioners continue to email feedback to her.

Meshkin discussed the non-motorized path master plan that was done in 2007. Due to changes in the use of the path and trends in cycling he would like to propose additional bike lanes for the safety of the cyclists and the pedestrians using the non-motorized paths. Meshkin provided a color coded map of the proposed routes. He particularly noted the lack of bike lanes on bridges throughout the township and the danger it poses to cyclists. As roads are resurfaced, he recommends asking for wider shoulders to be used for bike lanes. Meshkin will continue to meet with MDOT to address the concerns and long-term strategic plans, particularly as bridges are replaced in order to accommodate cyclists. Plans at the township level are fed into the MACC which then goes to regional, state and federal entities. He recommends plans to have shared use or bike lane access within one mile of every resident's home. Johnson asked if the county road commission can be influenced to stripe the bike lanes and Meshkin responded it is done every other year but the Allegan County Road Commission will not specify the shoulder as a bike lane due to maintenance and liability.

#### G. HUYSER FARM HOUSE

Simmons asked commissioners for feedback based on the site visit to the Huyser Farm Homestead. Bosscher feels it is worth saving but needs a lot of work. Simmons asked if there is a purpose. Sall said at the township board meeting a resident felt the green house should be torn down. Bosscher does not see the need to tear it down. Simmons asked if we could have two residences on the farm and Meshkin said we cannot without having approval from the heirs. Meshkin said the main reason was they did not want their farm developed. Sall said we talked about moving the old township hall there and Bosscher said he thinks it would be a cool location but may take away from the historical perspective and would rather see it stay where it is for that reason. Johnson said we would want to have a use for it if we moved it. Sall said the Griggs were present and did not seem alarmed but excited about the condition of the house. Bosscher asked if the Griggs put money into the house and the building authority controls for public use would it still qualify. Meshkin said the Griggs family is willing to put sweat equity but not fund big ticket items and don't have the ability to put \$50-\$100,000 toward renovation but would do a good job of maintaining it. The Building Authority is a project management group doing projects such as tearing down the old prison, the mansion, built the fire department and can be used as a method of financing. If the BA is involved and if they finance it they own the project until the debt is paid off and then it reverts to the township, i.e., the fire department is deeded to Laketown but technically to the BA until it is paid off. Shore Acres was the same way and when the bond was paid off, the property

went to the township. The BA could take on the project and determine a way to finance but then the BA needs a way to pay the debt on the restoration so needs some kind of income. Meshkin envisions the BA take on the project to make it a livable structure and then rents to the Griggs or someone else who would work for the township to maintain the farm. It would not be a part of the parks budget; ownership would be in the name of the BA and could be a 20-year lease. Johnson asked if the bond has to be voted on and Meshkin said no it is done by the BA and anticipates it would be \$50-\$75,000. Once the debt is paid off, it would create revenue for the township. Lozon said the Griggs came forward with interest in it but would it have to be opened to the public to see if someone else might have interest. Meshkin said there is no legal requirement to bid but it would be smart to do an RFP (Request for Proposal) which could be done by advertising in the local papers and interview interested candidates. Sall said if we had the BA handle the project would we still have access to the blueberry farm and Meshkin responded it could not be a land division so yes, although we could say the house and a certain perimeter. Johnson asked if the township attorney would be involved and Meshkin said only at the point of selecting a person(s) interested in taking on the project would we want a contract or agreement drafted. Bosscher asked what the order of the project would be and Meshkin said first and foremost, he would want an affirmative from the Parks Commission to move forward before putting a lot of time and effort into the project. Johnson said we are getting to a point where we either put money in it to save it or it will continue to decay so regardless of its end purpose we have to decide if we want to save it or not and start the process one way or the other. Sall said we are already spending money now to contain it. Simmons said we have to remember someone is going to live there and it is going to be messy like the green house and if there is a fence around it, it will change the aesthetic of the park so want to consider that and experience of the residents. Sall suggested partnering with MSU and Meshkin responded that the administrative burden cannot be supported by staff. Meshkin said the concept of an onsite caretaker makes sense and the Griggs seemed to have the heart for it. Johnson agrees with Simmons and would not want to see it look like the green house. Simmons said how can we put limitations on someone like that? Meshkin said the purpose is to save it for its historical value and recognize the Huyser donation of a sustenance farm and its 1930's vintage home is of historic value for public purpose. Sall said we do have historical preservation in the parks plan.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Bosscher and seconded by Sall to direct staff to draft a request for proposal to individuals interested in the renovation, maintenance and caretaking of the Huyser Farm Homestead to be published in the local newspaper and township newsletter. Sall called for a vote on the motion. 4 to 1 vote – MOTION APPROVED**

## ARTICLE VIII. NEW BUSINESS

### A. NO DOG SIGNS

Sall asked that Meshkin get more dog signs for the parks. Lozon asked for more discussion about no dogs in the parks noting that Ottawa County is more liberal with the dogs but there are things they do that make it work for them. Lozon would like to table for further discussion at the July meeting. Sall will put on July agenda to improve signage and review overall pet policy.

Lozon said ticks are so horrible in the parks and suggested getting signage to explain the dangers of ticks. Lozon said Ottawa County parks have nice signs to better educate. Lozon will contact Ottawa County to obtain more information and the possibility of purchasing signs from them.

Lozon also suggested posting notices about the barred owls having babies. Meshkin responded that last year's notice was posted by a resident and he has had no contact with him this year.

#### ARTICLE IX. ADJOURNMENT

**A motion was made by Simmons and seconded by Lozon to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 P.M. Sall called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED.**