

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

July 19, 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

Jim Delaney of 6298 144th Avenue asked if there was information about what happened at Wolters Woods on June 24th. Meshkin stated there was no police report given to the township because the incident was unrelated to the park. Delaney asked for clarification of the meeting format, specifically to have citizen comments at the end of the meeting and not just the beginning citing Allegan County meeting minutes and guidelines. Meshkin responded stated that Allegan County does not have jurisdiction over the township and the placement of the citizen comments on the agenda is at the township's discretion. Delaney said he prefers to have them at the beginning and the end of the meeting.

Mitra Delaney of 6298 144th Avenue asked that prior to the approval of the minutes, that the section regarding the Huyser farmhouse be read aloud. Delaney also noted that letters have been submitted from residents and signatures obtained in opposition of further spending on township parks. Residents want to maintain the quiet, rural area and not have too many parks which cost too much money and increase traffic in the township. Delaney also referenced a letter submitted by Ken Vermeulen commenting on the fence behind Wolters Woods not being maintained. Delaney said residents in the township do not want a dog park noting there are other areas near the township with chain link fence sufficient for dogs to run. Delaney commented on the May meeting at the Huyser farmhouse stating that it should not be renovated at taxpayers' expense and burden.

Delaney feels the Griggs are not qualified to do the renovation and Meshkin's suggestion that it be funded by the Building Authority is more debt and unacceptable.

Tom Hoekman of 4174 62nd Street thanked Michelle Sall for the work done on the most recent newsletter pertaining to the parks related topics.

Al Meshkin of 3969 65th Street provided an overview of the breakdown of a tax bill for a home valued at \$120,224 and \$134,400 SEV. The tax bill is \$3,264.94 broken down as follows: School - \$1,923.21; County - \$731.42; Township - \$429.00 (\$360.66 special vote approved for fire, drains, paths) leaving \$68.34 (2.1%). The \$68.34 reflects the amount of money allocated for all township services and benefits. This information is public record and accessible on the county website.

Sheri Sirko of 6397 Hidden Ponds asked why is it necessary to spend every penny we get and why a portion could not be put in a coffer for a rainy day. She finds it troublesome that we never have anything left.

Londa Anderson of 4162 Beeline expressed concern that as a park user, there are many people outside of the township that come to use the parks and do not pay taxes to support them. Anderson expressed concern regarding unleashed dogs in the parks noting there are a lot of rules but no way to enforce them. Do we need a park ranger? She feels that dogs are a huge problem. Anderson also noted that there are not enough parking spaces at the beach and often sees out of state license plates on the cars parked there. She asked if township permits could be used so residents are able to access the beach. Anderson noted that many people from outside of the area also come to Huyser Farm to pick free blueberries and she does not feel the township should supplement other communities. Lastly, Anderson does not feel the township should be channeling resources into more parks when the current parks cannot be maintained.

Sall reported receiving the following communications: an application to reserve a park; request from George DeWitt to pull the beach grass from the beach; complaint from Elizabeth TerHaar regarding the cleaning of the road way near her home and the over growing vines on the bike paths; a request from Mitra Delaney that minutes be recorded and commissioners speak clearly into the microphones.

ARTICLE III. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approval of Minutes

Meshkin clarified that minutes are not verbatim but highlights of board discussions and actions taken during the meeting. The minutes are a document of the board, drafted for approval and simply a record of the board activity.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Simmons and seconded by Johnson to approve the June 21, 2017 minutes with the following corrections noted: page 3,**

paragraph 3 correction of the word Ottawa; page 6 paragraph 1 noting access to the blueberry farm at Huyser; location of the meeting corrected to township hall. Sall called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED

ARTICLE IV. APPROVAL OF TREASURER’S REPORT

The bills to be paid as of June 2017 were reviewed. Maintenance: Veldhof – \$480.00, Heavener Property Svcs - \$195.00; Contracted Services: John Kunkel - \$155.00, Robert Jerow \$180.00; Capital Outlay: N1 Construction LLC - \$4,100.00, Overisel Lumber Co. - \$4207.74; Land Acquisition: \$21,949.44; Electricity: Consumers Energy - \$48.19; Taxes: \$13.77.

Johnson asked about the Macatawa Bank loan for \$21,949.44 and Meshkin said it is the payment on the Township Hall Recreation Park (3rd of 5 years). Bosscher asked about Shore Acres pavilion and Meshkin said a lot of hard work was done by Ben Barton who found a contractor and a lumber company to give a 33% on materials to build a 24’ x 32’ shelter with concrete and shingled roof for the disc golfers. Simmons said Barton has been very instrumental and Sall noted he also negotiated a donation of \$2,000.00.

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

ARTICLE V. TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORTS – Sall

- a. Sall reported that the a question was raised at the Board meeting asking if there are signs at Sanctuary Woods prohibiting burning. Lozon said a few months ago there was a fire at the top of the stairs. Sall asked if we have a no burning sign and Meshkin said it is an ordinance not to burn west of 66th Street.

ARTICLE VI. STAFF REPORTS

- a. Meshkin reported that several things going on, Laketown Beach had the beach grass trimmed back as requested; bike paths are being trimmed and sand cleared off; the trails at Wolters Woods have not been done yet; the gate at Sanctuary Woods was vandalized and is being repaired. There was discussion as to whether the vandal had been arrested and if restitution would be made for the repairs and Meshkin said it is unlikely as there is no proof. Johnson expressed concern about locking cars inside of the park once the gate is closed. Noah Sall reported on the work that the Holland Youth Connections group is doing at Farview Park to groom the trails, paint and hauling lumber to the pond to be used for the dock. Simmons asked when the dock will be put in and Sall responded that the frame is built and he is waiting for the barrels. Simmons also

asked if he bench would be relocated expressing concern about the erosion around the pond. Sall will take a picture of a potential relocation for the next meeting. The Youth Connections group will work for four more weeks at 3 days per week and 4 hours per day. Huyser will be the next project to haul away the brush that Williams has been cutting out of the blueberry bushes and other clean-up tasks.

ARTICLE VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. BEACH

Johnson said Schrottenboer has made stunning progress on the stairs, nicely cleaned off. Meshkin said there is no update on the grants. Johnson said he does not get down on the week-ends but this is the first he has heard of out of state plates at the beach. Meshkin said it has come up before and there was a time period over 25 years ago when Laketown Beach had a resident only policy. A public park is a public park so it would be illegal to not allow others to use. Sall said she was at the beach over the 4th of July and there was a lot of trash floating in on the water. Meshkin heard that it was because of the rain and the rivers are being cleaned out of debris which is now flowing down to the beach; a shoreline issue. There was a request to remove beach grass to increase beach access and Bosscher said he feels we should let nature take its course and the others agreed. There was discussion about where to place the bike rack and if there is a better place.

B. INVASIVE SPECIES

Johnson invited Keith Kluting of Black River Habitat who is very experienced and has worked with the township in the past on invasive species. Kluting helped to locate the Wooley Adelgid that is attacking the Canadian Hemlock trees in Sanctuary Woods. Kluting is looking at how to treat it as it is relatively new to Michigan, more often found out east. Kluting said it is difficult to say how bad the infestation is but could be bad on the top of the tree. Simmons asked about timing for treatment and Kluting said the subdivision to south is already treating for it; chemicals will last in the tree for 7 years but the problem is limited to amount of chemicals you can apply to an acre of land which would be difficult to measure with the number of trees and sections. It would be a several year project. Meshkin asked Kluting to prepare a quote for the treatment. Bosscher said ODC has treated some other invasive species in some of the parks. Sall said the Japanese Knotweed is in the township noting the challenge is that if it doesn't get treated by residents it will continue to spread.

C. DOG PARK

This item was tabled.

D. PICKLE BALL

Johnson reported that he and Bosscher staked out where the proposed pickle ball court would be located per the master plan's tennis court site. Johnson noted the sport is gaining greatly in popularity. Meshkin suggested applying for a \$45,000 with a \$15,000 match to fund the court; a project potentially for 2018. It was agreed that a soil test would be done by the township and then work with a contractor to determine feasibility.

E. FIVE YEAR RECREATION PLAN UPDATE

Sall reported that she made minor updates to the plan and will now turn the draft over to the township for completion. Sall explained to the audience that the 5-year plan must be in place in order to apply and qualify for grants. Bosscher provided updated maps of the bike paths and lanes and asked that the commissioners review it and provide feedback.

F. HUYSER FARM HOUSE

Sall said the RFP (request for proposal) was in the newsletter and also on the website noting the deadline is September 1.

ARTICLE VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. PET POLICY

Sall reviewed the current pet policy restricting animals in some parks and not others. Lozon wants to take a look at the policy saying it was addressed that we cannot support our rules and we depend on residents to follow the rules but there are no consequences. Lozon said she has been to Ottawa County parks and there is a patrol person who does ticket people who have their dogs off leash. Do we need to rethink those rules and be able to get more forceful? Lozon had pictures of what is posted in Ottawa County parks as far as making it more direct about the leash rules. Simmons said it is hard to enforce if you are not there to witness it. Johnson asked if a specific message has been put in the quarterly newsletter about what parks allow and don't allow. There was discussion about disposable bag receptacles for cleanup. Simmons thinks there should be a park where dogs could be off the leash. A suggestion was made to have fencing around the tot lot area at Wolters Woods to protect the children and allow dogs to be off leash. Mary Griggs is in favor of fencing the kids in. Bosscher said as a parent of younger children he appreciates a fence around the tot lot and leashed dogs on the trails. Meshkin said to include it in the 5-yr plan. Sall asked if any action should be taken and Johnson said to add a comment about the dog policy in the newsletter and keep talking about it. Simmons said it is surprising how many people have dogs in the area and thinks a dog park would be huge asset.

B. DAY OF CARING

Sall said she will organize the event (September 21) as she has done in the past and asked for suggested projects. Bosscher asked what kinds of projects were done in the past. Sall said 60 volunteers at various parks doing trail clearing, cutting back overgrowth, spreading stone and bark. Simmons suggested bridges at Farview be a project. Johnson said a group could paint the bridges with concrete gray color at Sanctuary Woods and Meshkin said it had been done two weeks ago. Sall said there may not be the expertise available to do bridge work. Griggs said he builds bridges for residential and offered to volunteer. Simmons asked if we want to see what a fence would cost at Wolters Woods. Sall asked Bosscher to get a quote for a fence. Bosscher said a chain link with black coating would be best option. Sall asked the commissioners to send her project ideas and noted the forms are due August 18 to United Way.

C. ADDRESS COMMENTS

Sall addressed the comments made by Delaney about the fence at Wolters Woods and Meshkin said there is a fence that goes around the perimeter of the park. Sall asked to have Williams look at the fence. Meshkin said a park ranger was is not feasible because a ranger does not have the same ability as a deputy. Simmons suggested the DNR and Meshkin said there is not the millage to support it.

Lozon provided signs for the parks and brochures for the office to educate on the severity of ticks.

ARTICLE IX. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Simmons and seconded by Bosscher to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 P.M. Sall called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED.