

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

Regular Meeting at 7:00PM

September 20, 2017

ARTICLE I. CALL TO ORDER

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michelle Sall, Ryan Bosscher, Karen Simmons
MEMBERS ABSENT: Jim Johnson
STAFF PRESENT: Al Meshkin – Township Manager
Diane Ybarra – Recording Secretary

ARTICLE II. CITIZEN COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ken Vermulen of 6249 147th Avenue asked what is going on with the dog park down the road from his place.

Mitra Delaney of 6298 144th Avenue stated that she has a letter of over 150 signatures from residents and will submit it again with today's date. Also, residents asked for change in the parks agenda to include citizen comments at the end in order to comment on new business. Meshkin asked for a document that shows signatures. Delaney said she will submit the document next month.

Karen Massengill of 6271 143rd Avenue expressed her gratitude for Bosscher's communication and engagement. Massengill also feels that additional citizen comments should be at the end of the agenda, consistent with other meeting agenda formats. Massengill spoke in objection of adding additional parks to the township stating there is a plethora of recreation activities within five miles of here. She moved to the township for country living and feels additional parks would erode the overall character of the township as farmland is disappearing due to the development.

Delaney asked if adjustments will be made to the plan before it goes to board.

Meshkin advised the public hearing for the 5-Year Parks Plan is coming up on the agenda, which is the appropriate time for such discussion. Bosscher added it is on the

agenda and public comments will be taken at that time. Simmons said there will be time to make changes before the plan is given to the board. Meshkin explained what a public hearing is and its use.

Sall said there is no funding for a dog park right now but is identified as one of our goals and would be under consideration if a grant becomes available. Vermulen asked if Meshkin could comment on the survey stakes on the 147th Avenue property. Meshkin said the township is not involved in any survey work on that property.

In regards to the placement of citizen comments on the agenda, all commissioners agreed to have them at the beginning and end of the agenda. Sall also added that the 5-year plan document was done completely in-house with little to no expense to the township. Sall questioned the 145 signatures Delaney allegedly submitted noting that she had not seen the actual signatures.

ARTICLE III. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approval of Minutes

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Bosscher and seconded by Simmons to approve the August 16, 2017 minutes amended to include the Delaney name in the tax bill discussion. 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 August 2017 were reviewed. Maintenance: Veldhof – \$480.00, Heavener Property Svcs - \$786.00, Capital One Commercial - \$182.26, Chef Container - \$39.00, Graafschap Hardware - \$25.78, Paul Harris - \$170.00, Woody’s Small Engine Repair - \$29.81, Repcolite Paints - \$57.80; Contracted Services: John Kunkel - \$155.00; Supplies: Robert Jerow - \$10.00; Electricity: Consumers Energy - \$49.39; Salaries: Robert Jerow - \$255.00; Taxes: \$19.51.

Sall said Johnson is questioned the restroom cleaning at Wolters Woods. Meshkin said the reason is to detail the restrooms and a photo to substantiate that it has been done. Johnson questioned if we need to continue the portable restroom at the boat launch and it was decided that it is necessary as the park is used throughout the winter.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Simmons and seconded by Bosscher to approve the Treasurer’s Report as submitted. Sall called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE V. TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORTS – Simmons

- a. Simmons reported the resolution for animals in the parks was the only topic related to the Parks Commission. It was approved.

ARTICLE VI. STAFF REPORTS

- a. Meshkin reported Dan has been maintaining all of the parks, busy with preparing for the Day of Caring. Volunteers will be at Sanctuary Park, Wolters Woods and Farview Park. Additional tools and supplies have been purchased for the event. The dock is in at Farview Park. The bike path on 62nd Street north of 147nd Avenue has been repaired. There seems to be a reoccurring sink hole of sorts that is a mystery. Vermulen said he frequently walks that path and there is definitely an issue under the pavement.

ARTICLE VII. PUBLIC HEARING ON FIVE YEAR RECREATION PLAN

Sall explained that a formal 5-year plan is required in order to apply for grants which are critical to the parks as there is no millage levied in the township for parks. She can appreciate the request to provide statistical data but frankly the township does not have the staff resources to fund that work.

Sherri Sirko of 6379 Hidden Ponds asked if it is possible to have park surveys available for residents when they come in to vote. Meshkin said the surveys could be available with the other hand outs available in the lobby but cannot be directly involved with the election. Sirko asked if there is no funding for a dog park, where is the funding coming from for the plans at Huyser Farm. Sall said there is no funding but a general budget. Sall said due to the cost of the project, it would be necessary to apply for a grant. Sirko asked if one is in the works and Sall responded there is not at this time.

Sylvia Vermulen said she would like to encourage the group to think about the lakes and increasing public access to Lake Michigan.

Mitra Delaney of 6298 144th Avenue spoke in opposition of moving the old township hall to another location to be used for restrooms or an educational facility. Bosscher said he would hate to move from the historical location so he would be in favor of removing the last line on page 19. Meshkin advised the intent of the public hearing is to take into consideration public comment but not make immediate decisions to amend the document during the meeting. Sall said we have a lot of requests for restrooms in our parks, something that is greatly lacking. Vermulen said do we really want to move it and use it as a restroom; a historical building should be preserved asset. Meshkin said it has been available and no one has requested to use it probably because it lacks modern facilities. Moving it to Huyser Farm and updating it to include barrier free restrooms along with a learning space would repurpose the structure. Massengill suggested identifying historical

sites and prioritize them in order in the plan. Massengill questioned the purpose of the public hearing and direction being taken.

Vermulen asked if the old township hall is moved to Huyser Farm, would it be preserved as it is as he sees that as the value of the building. Meshkin said the objective is to restore it based on a goal of reflecting on a slice of time, 1880 or 1987 when it was stopped being used, a decision that has not yet been made. With the Felt Mansion, the decision was made to make as close to its original 1928 state. The intent of the 5-year plan is to discuss any and all potential future plans for the parks should an applicable grant become available for any one of the ideas. If it is not in the plan, you cannot apply for the grant. Meshkin said the Parks Commissioners are elected officials and they use their best judgment on how and what to provide for the township parks.

Sirko referenced the sledding hills noted in the survey but does not see an action plan for a sledding hill in the document. Meshkin responded that there is one at Shore Acres Park.

Delaney spoke in objection of the proposed dog park on page 33.

Sall closed the public hearing.

Simmons said the document looks great but questioned if a change should be made on page 19 regarding the move of the old township hall to change the term considering to “considered”. Simmons also suggested adding text about the recent resolution approved to allow leashed dogs in specific parks.

Following discussion a motion was made by Sall and seconded by Bosscher to recommend the Township Board approve the Community Parks & Recreation 5-Year plan with noted amendments. Sall called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED

ARTICLE VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. BEACH

Simmons said she understands the beach is looking good right now. Sall asked if snow fences are up yet and Meshkin said there are some up but more may be added to control the sand movement.

B. INVASIVE SPECIES

Meshkin reported that Kevin Kluting of Black River Habitat is working on a quote to treat the Wooley Adelgid that is attacking the Canadian Hemlock trees in Sanctuary Woods. Laketown is also partnering with ODC to treat the Japanese Knotwood at Saugatuck State Dunes Park, Shore Acres and the Felt Mansion. Sall asked if the Bittersweet is being treated and Meshkin advised that he is also working on that.

C. DOG PARK

Sall stated this item has been tabled due to lack of funding at this time.

D. PICKLE BALL

Meshkin submitted a proposal to commissioners from M.C. Smith and Associates in the amount of \$7200 to oversee the proposed project, suggesting it be bid in January in preparation of the next fiscal budget discussion. The estimate for two courts with proper fencing and a concrete walkway for barrier-free access would be approximately \$50,000. Bids could be obtained for planning purposes and postpone the construction for one year. Meshkin feels there is need for the pickle ball courts based on requests received. Bosscher expressed concern that due to the remote location, there may not be much use, noting that tournaments require six or more courts. It would be better to have in an area with higher population. Following discussion, it was decided to table the item until the next meeting.

E. HUYSER FARM HOUSE

Simmons said she understands this will be discussed in more detail next month but wanted to mention that in all three proposals, there was no mention of salary, financial support for materials or labor. The Huyser Farm project will never be the Felt Mansion, which is still not self-sufficient and there is no historical value to the Huyser. She would prefer to see money spent on preserving the property than the buildings. Bosscher said it would be good to ask the people who submitted the proposals to attend the meeting to ask how much they are willing to put in of their own money for this project. Meshkin said he will invite them to come.

F. DAY OF CARING

Sall explained that the Day of Caring is an annual volunteer program sponsored by the Greater Ottawa County United Way. Volunteers, primarily from local businesses, donate their time to non-profits. Last year 50 volunteers worked in five parks and tomorrow there are more than 40 volunteers scheduled to work on projects at Huyser Farm, Wolters Woods and Sanctuary Woods. This is a big deal for the township because a lot of work gets done at no cost to the township.

G. WOLTERS WOODS PLAYGROUND FENCE

Bosscher explained the two proposals for the fence at Wolters Woods playground. Both quotes are from Fence Consultants, one is for the immediate perimeter for a cost of \$3,736 and would cover a larger area for \$7,157. He recommends waiting to see if once the dogs are allowed in the park it becomes a problem keeping them out of the playground area. If there is no issue, he sees no need for the fence. Simmons supported his suggestion. Bosscher will keep the quotes for a frame of reference in the future. Bosscher also asked

for an update on the fence around the perimeter of the park and Meshkin stated he is discussing that with Vermulen.

ARTICLE IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. LAKEVIEW PARK CONCEPT PLAN

Jeremy Myers and Andy Kenyon from City of Holland Parks and Recreation provided a presentation of the proposed Lakeview School Park plan. This is a 9-acre parcel that is currently being used for Little League and soccer practices. The City is looking for other ideas for the park and potentially a partnership opportunity with Laketown Township. Kenyon noted the major renovations done at Moran Park transitioning many of the tennis courts to pickle ball courts which has been very well received with high utilization. Other ideas for the park have been a walking trail, ball diamond, soccer and Lacrosse fields.

Kenyon said the previously Holland Public School owned property is now part of the City of Holland 2018 Parks and Recreation plan. The City reached out to M.C. Smith and Associates and received a quote for \$8-\$10,000 for the design work. Kenyon would like to see collaboration with Laketown on potential grant opportunities.

Simmons asked if there is any idea at the top of the list. Kenyon replied pickle ball, irrigation, parking, playground facility, restrooms and a walking trail. At this point everything is on the table and they will include public input in the designing of the park.

Meshkin suggested doing a full study of all park facilities within a certain area to determine how to fill the voids together as a shared vision. Many comments have been made about non-residents using Laketown parks but the same can be said for Laketown residents using the City of Holland Parks; the collaboration idea goes both ways.

Vermulen asked how costly a swimming pool would be and Kenyon could not even dare guess but commented that it is expensive to build and maintain. Splash pads alone are \$10,000 and more with many of the same regulations as swimming pools. Vermulen asked if there is a need for more ball diamonds in the City of Holland and Kenyon said that more are needed as the Matt Urban Facility is used seven days a week with more than 125 tournaments held every year which translates to revenue for the city and local businesses.

Kenyon thanked the commission and looks forward to more conversation. Myers said Bosscher has been very active at the City of Holland Parks and Recreation meetings and appreciates his involvement.

ARTICLE X. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Massengill thanked the commissioners for engaging in the work being done.

Vermulen questioned how much pickle ball courts would be used out here if people can drive 1-2 miles into Holland to use them there. Meshkin reiterated the high utilization of the ball diamond at the Township Hall Recreation Park and believes the pickle ball courts would be just as popular. The need for active recreation is very strong. Myers said it is a very active sport and the trend is climbing across the U.S.

ARTICLE XI. ADJOURNMENT

Sall adjourned the meeting at 8:34 pm.