

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

Regular Meeting at 7:00PM

October 18, 2017

ARTICLE I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Michelle Sall called the regular Parks & Recreation Commission meeting to order at 7:02 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michelle Sall, Ryan Bosscher, Karen Simmons, Jim Johnson  
MEMBERS ABSENT: None  
STAFF PRESENT: Al Meshkin – Township Manager  
Diane Ybarra – Recording Secretary

ARTICLE II. CITIZEN COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Sall advised a letter was received from Aneka Kruithoff asking for a sidewalk in front of her house.

ARTICLE III. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of Minutes

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Bosscher and seconded by Simmons to approve the September 20, 2017 minutes with correction to page 3, Article VI. a. noting Huyser Farm and not Farview Park as a work site for the Day of Caring. 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 September 2017 were reviewed. Maintenance: Veldhof – \$480.00, Heavener Property Svcs - \$8,821.00; Contracted Services: John Kunkel - \$155.00, Dokk’s Firehouse Dogs - \$500.00, Consumers Energy - \$50.00; Supplies: Piers Feed Co. - \$70.00, Meijer - \$10.00; Electricity: Consumers Energy - \$49.47; Salaries: Robert Jerow - \$180.00; Taxes: \$13.77.

Johnson questioned the use of the plastic barrels and Meshkin responded it was for the dock at Farview Park. Other expenses were for a bridge repair at Huyser by Heavener and path cleared at the west side of the blueberries; limestone for Day of Caring consisting of two loads at Wolters Woods and two loads at Sanctuary Woods.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Simmons and seconded by Johnson 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 – Sall

- a. Sall reported the 5-year plan and resolution for animals in the parks were approved by the Board.

#### ARTICLE VI. STAFF REPORTS

- a. Meshkin reported that Williams has been clearing a lot of trees and branches in all parks due to the high winds last week. Next week he will work on removing graffiti at the beach and Sanctuary Woods. Meshkin asked that the commissioners email him with additional items needing attention.

#### ARTICLE VII. OLD BUSINESS

##### A. HUYSER FARM HOUSE PROPOSALS

Sall reported that proposals were received from Mark and Sherry Rubino, Joe Hutta and Joel and Mary Griggs, all of whom were invited to the meeting tonight, though Hutta and Griggs were not in attendance. Sherry Rubino spoke representing the proposal she and her husband submitted. Rubino proposed treating the Huyser farmhouse in the same manner that the old Township Hall has been preserved, clean and empty the inside of the house, maintain the outside including clearing of the overgrowth around it and leave it as is. She feels it is important to the township residents that the farm be left in its natural state and not a working farm as proposed by the Griggs. Rubino said she would gladly volunteer to work on the maintenance of the grounds. Simmons asked if she would continue to visit the park if not awarded the position and Rubino said yes, it is a nice park. Bosscher asked what her role would be in maintaining and repairing the house. Rubino responded that it was stated at the last meeting that there were no funds available for the project so assumed that it would be supported in the same manner as the old Township Hall. Johnson said the RFP was extended to see what interest there might be in the township to potentially move into the house and different levels of responses were received from fixing up the outside to expanding it to a full operating farm. Rubino said the original intent of inheriting it was

that the family wanted to keep it in its natural setting with wildlife, which is decreasing in this area with all of the new development.

Johnson said the commissioners are reviewing all options and no decision has been made as to whether the house be renovated or closed up like the old Township Hall. Bosscher said his vision is to have the house lived in because the Huyser family wanted someone to live in the house and take care of the grounds. If the house was occupied it would not be vandalized and it is worthless to have it sit empty so it should be used by a caretaker or it should be rented out. Rubino asked if township population has been asked about the project and suggested it be put to a vote as it will dramatically change the area. Rubino asked who will pay for the renovation costs. Johnson said sweat equity and either reduced or no rent in return for the work done. Rubino stated to find such a person would be a person being taken advantage of and feels it will cost more to restore the house than what it is worth. Johnson said the family gave the township a valuable piece of land with a historical home. Rubino argued that there is nothing in writing from the family with their wishes so it is an assumption along with the fact that there were no funds left to support a renovation.

Jim Delaney said we already have the Felt Mansion that we are spending a considerable amount of time on and this is more of a cost issue, too. How much is it going to cost? Bosscher suggested getting a builder to provide an estimate of what it would cost to bring the house up to code.

Massengill asked what the cost is for monthly maintenance. Meshkin responded that it is less than \$10,000 per year. Massengill challenged that someone would come in for less than \$1,000 per month to restore and maintain the house expressing concern for where the money would come from. Massengill asked how long the township has been in possession of the property. Meshkin responded that it was donated in 2001 and what is being reviewed tonight are the different proposals received in response to the RFP's. Based on market value for rent in Laketown Township at \$1500 per month or more, it would be a fair deal for a tenant. There could be a mix of options for renovation and preservation of the house and farm.

Simmons said we have had no one come forward to commit to sweat equity and their own money. Meshkin responded one proposal included sweat equity and some mention of financial support. The Griggs came to the township with an unsolicited proposal based on their feeling that the project has promise.

Mary Lynn Webster of 6630 Halcyon Drive asked if the house was worth renovating.

Joy Cooklin of 4098 64<sup>th</sup> Street questioned the appendix of the 5-year parks plan noting the farm concept plan with a fruit stand and bus parking. Meshkin said it was a plan developed by a consultant. Cooklin asked if the Griggs are interested in the house only and not the farm. Cooklin asked if the notes and proposals submitted are available to the public. Meshkin said he would email the information to Cooklin upon receipt of her email address. The meeting notes will be on the website but the proposals will not be listed as attachments.

Simmons asked to further discuss and Johnson would like more time to research the proposals. Simmons said she is not interested in paying a caretaker's salary and the landlord situation has not been a good experience and does not see the Huyser farmhouse as a great place to continue that. Simmons also noted that the Griggs proposal included raising animals and questioned how that would change the character of the park. Simmons feels there are a lot of things that can be done in the park without a caretaker noting the trails are fine; it is a natural park donated for the use of the residents. The Griggs proposal requests that the township pay too much for renovations and Simmons does not think the house has historical value in the same way as the Felt Mansion.

Bosscher said he looked at the options and does not want to see demolition nor take away from what the residents have with the park right now. Perhaps the Rubino proposal is the most prudent option right now. Rubino stated that as a resident across the street, she does not see that much vandalism occurring but feels the out buildings should be torn down as they have no historical value and most are filled with junk. Johnson said he does not know the history of the outbuildings or if there is a commitment to the family to keep them intact but agrees with Rubino's comments. As far as the house goes, it has been broken into many times and people break the windows so security lighting security was added to deter vandals. Meshkin said the door has been kicked in at least once this summer and more times throughout the year. Rubino stated the house should be torn down as it is a public nuisance.

Sall asked if Rubino is asking that the house be torn down and Rubino responded yes unless there is a low cost solution to keep it. It should be handled in the same manner as the old Township Hall if it is not torn down.

Simmons asked Sall's opinion and she said she would hate to see the house torn down, is happy to see the lighting and because it was donated, the township has an obligation to maintain it structurally. Sall understands that it is not an old mansion and is hesitant to have someone live there because it will change the feel of the park.

Johnson agrees with Sall, leaning toward keeping the house as sentimental value to honor the family. Johnson does not like the idea of renters or tenants, sectioning off a portion of the property making it inaccessible to others. Johnson suggests sealing the house off and keeping it intact externally. Bosscher echoed Johnson's suggestion.

Meshkin said if you seal it up, there will continue to be break-ins because people are curious so the doors and windows would have to be frequently repaired. Meshkin suggested leaving the doors unlocked so the doors are not vandalized.

Rubino asked how often the old Township Hall has been broken into and Meshkin responded oddly enough, never in all these years. Johnson said the old Township Hall is on a less traveled road with a house very close by unlike the Huyser farmhouse which is more secluded.

Massengill said if the perimeter is secured a sign can be posted stating that trespassers are being recorded. Meshkin said an inexpensive monitoring system had been quoted. Johnson suggested removing the overgrowth to deter vandals and supports the use of cameras and or motion detection lights.

Meshkin asked if the commissioners want to give Griggs one more time to present. Johnson said when he looks at income and expenses he did not assume that the township would be paying the expenses noting the proposal and its intent somewhat unclear.

Sall asked if there is one of the three proposals that commissioners are prepared to vote on. Bosscher feels the Griggs should be given an opportunity to discuss their proposal.

Johnson said of the three he prefers the Rubino proposal but would not be opposed to getting more information from the Griggs and would be fine with delaying a decision.

Bosscher agrees with Johnson's analysis and feels it would be a courtesy to Griggs to hear their plan.

Sall declined Hutta's proposal and wants more clarification from Rubino and Griggs.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Sall and seconded by Johnson to decline the Hutta proposal and continue discussion on the Griggs and Rubino proposal.**

Simmons said she does not support the proposal and feels it would be a waste of time for the Griggs to present.

**Sall called for a vote on the motion. Two ay and two nays – motion failed.**

Sall said we looked at the Griggs' proposal several times and they had the opportunity to be at the meeting but did not present. The Huyser farmhouse has been discussed for years and she is pleased that someone has come forward to support it being saved.

Meshkin suggested tabling a decision on a proposal and authorize the township staff to put security in place to deter the vandalism.

Bosscher said if we go with the Rubino proposal and there is still vandalism, then security measures could be put in place. He supports Johnson's suggestion to clear the brush from around the house.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Bosscher and seconded by Sall to approve the Rubino proposal. Sall called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

## B. GRANTS IN PROGRESS

Meshkin reported that the beach area and restroom site visits have taken place and preliminary scoring has been done with opportunity to respond to areas of weakness in the grant. Responses should be available by the end of the year.

## C. INVASIVE SPECIES

There is no update available on this item.

## D. DOG PARK

Meshkin reported that the property that was being considered for a potential dog park has been purchased so it is no longer available.

Bosscher shared survey results on Facebook showed 22 people in favor and 27 opposed to a dog park in the township. Bosscher suggested updating signage in the parks to reflect the new rules regarding dogs in the parks.

## E. PICKLE BALL PROPOSAL

Simmons would like to see what the City of Holland Parks and Recreation will do for pickle ball courts on this side of town. Bosscher said the City of Holland came to the meeting last month on with a proposal to share costs. Sall said it was a proposal to share in the design cost and not for construction. It might be better to have the pickle ball courts at Lakeview than the Township Hall Recreation Park. Meshkin asked for a decision to move forward or not in order to advise the consultant.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Sall and seconded by Bosscher to table the decision to move forward with pickle ball courts at the Township Hall Recreation Park. Sall called for a vote on the motion. UNANIMOUS DECISION – MOTION APPROVED**

## ARTICLE VIII. NEW BUSINESS

### A. BEACH STAIRS

Sall said communication was received from Schrottenboer regarding the clearing of the stairs on the west side. Johnson had pictures to show how the some of the posts are completely out of the sand. Snow fences are in place to slow down the shifting of the sand. Meshkin said the depth of the poles were full depth and began exposing a few years ago. It will likely bury itself and the best we can do is to vegetate the area as a serious planting has not been done for many years. A suggestion was made to hydraulically position posts in the sand. The dunes will move and it is difficult to address without the neighboring properties. Meshkin said Schrottenboer may be willing to continue the work to some degree next season. Sall suggested sand bags be put in place where the posts are becoming

exposed. Meshkin suggested concrete bags be placed near the footings. Sall suggested that Meshkin work with someone to address the issue of the eroding posts.

ARTICLE IX. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Jim Delaney of 6298 144<sup>th</sup> Avenue thanked the board for the addition of the citizen comments at the end of the meeting.

ARTICLE X. ADJOURNMENT

**Sall adjourned the meeting at 8:16 pm.**