

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2013
6 PM – MERIDIAN SERVICE CENTER

Members Present: Julie Brixie, Frank Hatfield, James Kielbaso, Jon Mayes, Margo Smith (arrived 6:07 pm), Mark Stephens, Steve Webster (arrived 6:19 pm)

Members Absent: Robert Rusch

Staff: Director of Engineering and Public Works Ray Severy; Land Management Coordinator Jane Greenway; Parks and Recreation Department Secretary Robin Faust

Public Present: Township residents: Bill McConnell; Layne Cameron; Steve Brunner

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chair Kielbaso called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Approve Agenda

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER HATFIELD SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

Discussion:

Staff Secretary Faust suggested item #10a; Joint Meeting with Park Commission could be removed since a date had not been scheduled yet.

The amendment to the agenda was accepted by Board Members Brixie and Hatfield.

Voice vote on motion as amended. Motion passed.

3. Public Remarks

None

4. Approve Minutes for August 14, 2013

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER STEPHENS SECONDED, TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 14, 2013 MINUTES. Voice vote. Motion passed.

5. Communications

None

6. Presentations

None

7. New Business

a. Red Cedar Glen Preserve, east-west, non-motorized transportation access (bicycle)

Public Comment:

Bill McConnell, Tacoma Hills, spoke in support of developing a pathway to travel from Legg Park, through Red Cedar Glen, onto Sylvan Glen Road, especially now with the access created by the drain project. If a pathway is created and bicycle traffic is allowed, he believes the bicycle traffic will stay on the path and not transgress off it creating damage to sensitive areas. A pathway connection was designated by the Township on its Green Space Plan to be a shared pathway and asked to have it so designated now.

Layne Cameron, Okemos, stated two years ago, their bicycle group approached the Land Preservation Board to consider a pathway in this area but with the announcement of Drain Commissioner's project, they decided to wait to see what would develop. Their group would like to work with the Board to enhance the trail to allow bicycle traffic through the area. Their bike group advocates to enjoy nature, not destroy it, and people in the parks and land preserves report when things are wrong. Mr. Cameron summarized his report dated June 6, 2011 (copy distributed at meeting).

Steve Brunner, Okemos, summarized the process and development of the pump track in Eastgate Park. Bicyclists are looking for a transportation path that would avoid Grand River and parts of Van Atta Road which are dangerous at times and being able to go from Meridian Road to Van Atta Road, to Sylvan Glen to Dobie Road without hitting Grand River would be great. He believes individuals who are walking in the parks are the ones causing the damage because they would want to get away on foot which is quicker than on a bike.

Discussion:

- mountain bikes who go off natural trails cause damage
- it is the goal of the Land Preservation Board to bring the all land preservation parcels back to their natural state and are reluctant to improve paths or trails because it offers for other things to happen
- what assurances is there to keep bikes on the paths (Mr. McConnell suggested signage and education)
- bicycle traffic is allowed on all trails in Township Parks and there have not been any reports of damage by bicycles and barriers (trees, logs), signage and education could help deter traffic into sensitive areas

- The Green Space Plan predates this purchase and included a conservation corridor and shared use path from Sylvan Glen through Legg Park over to Van Atta Road.
- Question was raised on if the Board wants to attract visitors to the waterfall area; if not, need to address this issue now.
- This is an opportunity to provide a link between Dobie Road to Van Atta Road without going down Grand River or Jolly Road.
- Township Board's Policy includes protecting the environment but also addresses health and safety such as walkability and use of non-motorized modes of transportation; the Master Plan Goals and Objectives provide for multiple transportation networks; the Public Improvements Program includes a plan concept to link people to destinations such as home, parks, preserves, neighborhoods, work, stores, schools
- Need to look at the Land Preservation Millage language to see what it states about constructing pathways and allowing bicycle traffic.
- Suggested allowing bicycle traffic access for a designated period of time, use signage and education to prevent access into sensitive, protective areas and evaluate the use after a year or so and then if necessary can close to bike traffic
- Suggested a portion of the restoration budget could be used for landscape plantings and boulders, to help direct people to stay on a specific pathway, but will need to know the size of access the Drain Commissioner's Office will need for monitoring visits
- Do we want to prevent visitors from using the trail to the river
- Concerned about potential problems with trash and parking on Sylvan Glen
- If proceed, would access off Sylvan Glen need a trailhead sign, garbage can, etc. the cul-de-sac.
- Suggested looking at an alternative route to provide access from Van Atta over to Sylvan Glen Neighborhood such as at end the of Bonanza (this access was looked at during past Task Force Meetings and was negatively received by neighbors and residents)
- Concern raised on how to hold the hillside in place and develop a trail

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER STEPHENS SECONDED, TO ASK THE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT TO WORK WITH COORDINATOR GREENWAY AND LAYNE CAMERON TO PRODUCE A PLAN FOR A PROPOSED REWORK OF THE TRAIL TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY TO ALLOW BICYCLES ON THE TRAIL IN THE RED CEDAR GLEN PRESERVE.

Discussion:

- Need to know the budget needed for such a project; worried about using all the restoration funds up for it
- Are we saying we want to allow bicycles in this area
- When will restoration begin; (they have already seeded, will plant trees in late October)
- Restoration will happen but can help protect the land to keep people in the right areas and out of sensitive areas
- This can be a combined effort with the Drain Commissioner's Office and Engineering to avoid water damage
- When would maintenance be needed (big maintenance every five to ten years)

- Suggest looking at trailhead issues
- Suggest looking at a second pathway option along the power lines, trail on south side of railroad tracks (see red line on Green Space Map)
- Suggest developing trail to parking lot area
- Can the restoration funds provided by the Drain Commissioner's Office be used for this proposal
- Would like to see a natural habitat enhancement
- Would Drain Commissioner's office be receptive to this proposal

FRIENDLY AMENDMENT OFFERED TO INCLUDE THE WORDS "ON A TEMPORARY BASIS". The amendment was accepted by Board Members Brixie and Stephens.

Question was called.

Roll Call:

AYES: Jon Mayes, Julie Brixie, Stephen Webster, Mark Stephens, James Kielbaso

NAYS: Margo Smith, Frank Hatfield,

Motion passed 5-2

- b. Tihart-Cornell Wetland Land Preserve, land swap related to Cornell Road construction,

Director of Engineering and Public Works Ray Severy distributed and summarized the proposed land exchange of 200 feet of Tihart-Cornell Wetland Land Preserve on the construction of Cornell Road. The land to be exchanged is 40 feet by 200 feet immediately south of the south property line for an identical size immediately south of the north property line of 5215 Cornell Road. This would allow for the relocation of the driveway into the 5215 Cornell Road parcel and the lowering of the hill which will improve safety at this location and at the intersection of Cornell and Tihart Roads.

Discussion:

- Parcel owner is in agreement (yes)
- Does the new area have two large trees on it (yes)

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER WEBSTER SECONDED, TO RECOMMEND TO THE TOWNSHIP BOARD THAT THE TOWNSHIP EXCHANGE A PARCEL OF LAND 40 FEET BY 200 FEET IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF THE SOUTH PROPERTY LINE OF 5215 CORNELL ROAD FOR AN IDENTICAL SIZE PARCEL IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF THE NORTH PROPERTY LINE OF 5215 CORNELL ROAD.

Discussion:

- Mr. Spalding is in support of the land swap, even selling to the Township
- Need to cut down the hill and move the driveway for safety purposes
- There is no mortgage on the Spalding parcel

- This will be handled with two quit claim deeds, there is no legal problem

Question was called.

Voice vote. Motion passed

8. Old Business

None

9. Land Management Coordinator Report

- a. Southwest Meridian Uplands Site Restoration Project – Coordinator Greenway called to inquire the status of the project and Tom Eitniew, US Fish and Wildlife Services reported they are still very excited about the project, have made a number of site visits and plans for the area
- b. Davis/Foster Land Preserve Demolition Project – Coordinator Greenway reported the RFP was let and two bids were received with McKenzie at \$28,000 and Michigan Demolition at \$14,000. She has spoken with Sylvia Davis and she is in support of the project. The office was contacted by the State with respect to following the asbestos removal rules and since the State has worked with Michigan Demolition before, this portion of the project should go smoothly. Coordinator Greenway reported that the bid included a proposal plan for removal of the asbestos but did not include the cost for its actual removal. She will be bringing this amount back to the Board for approval at a later meeting.
- c. Northwest Land Preserve Site Restoration – Coordinator Greenway reported Nick Sanchez is developing the report and it will be given at the October meeting.
- d. Deer Management Program – Coordinator Greenway reported she and Manager Walsh met with Ed Crouse and Rick Foster regarding their threat to obtain an injunction to prevent hunting on the Foster/Crouse Land Preserve. After the meeting, she developed a communication, to be signed by Manager Walsh, stating the Township will not harvest on the Land Preserve this year but the site will be reconsidered next year. She also reported on a meeting she and Manager Walsh attended with representatives from Delta Dental who will be allowing harvesting on their parcel this year.

10. Other

- a. Joint Meeting with Park Commission, no date has been set – This item was removed from the agenda.

11. Public Comment

None

12. Closed Session

BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE MOVED, BOARD MEMBER WEBSTER SECONDED, TO MOVE INTO CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS LAND ACQUISITION.

Roll Call:

AYES: Jon Mayes, Julie Brixie, Steve Webster, Margo Smith, Frank Hatfield, Mark Stephens, Jim Kielbaso
NAYS: None

The Board entered into closed session at 7:59 pm.

BOARD MEMBER WEBSTER MOVED, BOARD MEMBER SMITH SECONDED, TO RETURN TO OPEN SESSION.

Roll Call:

AYES: Jon Mayes, Julie Brixie, Steve Webster, Margo Smith, Frank Hatfield, Mark Stephens, Jim Kielbaso
NAYS: None

The Board returned to open session at 8:15 pm.

13. Adjournment

BOARD MEMBER WEBSTER MOVED, BOARD MEMBER BRIXIE SECONDED, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 pm.