

**FINAL
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING**

Monday, February 26, 2024

2009 Township Drive
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chairperson Petsch called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

ROLL CALL: Present: Johnny Walker, Chairperson (*arrived 6:10pm*)
William Petsch, Vice Chairperson
Krystal Schwartz, Secretary
Bob Berkheiser
Ron Krueger
Laura Waterworth
Denise Vecellio

Absent: Mark Schoder, Maintenance Director

Also Present: Emily England, Director of Senior Services/Parks & Recreation
Allison Kennedy, Asst. to Parks & Recreation Director

COMMUNICATIONS:

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION by Krueger, seconded by Schwartz, to approve the December 18, 2023, Parks and Recreation Committee Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Vice Chairperson Petsch opened to Public Comments.

There were no comments.

Vice Chairperson Petsch closed to Public Comments.

Ms. Kennedy noted a correction to the agenda. League and Community Service Organization Report was listed as Item 2 and should have been Item 1.

ITEM 1: LEAGUE AND COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATION REPORT

Friends of Byers – Dean & Karen Schantz

Mr. Schantz shared the following with the Committee.

- We need approval of our events this year. Emily approved our Easter event as last month's meeting was canceled. We need about two months to plan.
- Our Easter event will be March 24th.
- Our antique vintage event, Ugly Duckling, will be August 11th (10am to 5pm)
- Boo Bash is October 19th (6:30pm to 8:30pm)
- Our Christmas event, Visit with Santa, is December 8th (11am to 5pm)
- On May 5th, we're doing a spring cleanup/flower planting with the Boy Scouts Troop 308.

Mr. Berkheiser – May 5, 2024?

Mr. Schantz – Yes, and that's all planned.

- I did talk to Collin who is working on the park benches. He finally contacted me, and I signed off on his project. He's got the benches going. I've told Mark that they're removing them, so that's in the works.
- Outside of that, we're feeding the ducks 200 pounds of corn a month.
- We're planning our projects for the north side of the barn this year with the big sign. We're getting our lumber package put together.
- We're also talking about the electrical at the farmhouse. I have two contractors and I'm looking at a third. We will try to get that in next month hopefully.

MOTION by Schwartz, seconded by Waterworth, to approve the agenda of 2024 Event Dates for the Friends of Byer's group. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Schantz – We also voted on officers and they're the same; myself, Karen and Mike.

Commerce Little League – Nikki Shaffer

Ms. Shaffer shared the following with the Committee.

- We are in the middle of registration for the spring season.
- Our board approved a project to update fencing at the first field at the second entrance at Maple Glen. We are fixing the backstop and raising the fences up to 8-12 feet to stop balls from hitting cars. That will run about \$35,000.
- For the fall season, we're looking at starting a Challenger Division which is for special needs individuals.

Interlakes Girls Softball – Angela Skiver

Ms. Skiver shared the following with the Committee.

- We are working through our registration. We're a few weeks away from cutting it off and deciding how many teams.
- We are a little lower again this year. As the trend goes, people will register later and want to sign up and we have to close down. But we're not down as much as I thought we were.
- Everything is going along as normal, except our bathrooms. I have some concerns and I don't know if those will be brought up later. We like to have those open. Usually, we work out an arrangement to get them open as soon as we get the water tested so we can have them up and running for the players.

Mr. Berkheiser discussed the timeline for cleanup, coordination of volunteers and opening of the restrooms with Ms. Skiver and Director England. Ms. Skiver noted that practices start mid-March.

Silo Ranch – Dawn Ray

Ms. Ray shared the following with the Committee.

- I just want to report that we have a full barn. We are up and running. We have 28 horses and 2 more are coming in this weekend.
- The roof panels were delivered last week.

Ms. Ray and Director England discussed scheduling of the roof repairs.

Ms. Ray –

- March 16th is our Easter event with the Easter Bunny. We will hide things in the sand and have photos with the Easter Bunny.
- April 6th is our Open House. It's going to be like a 4H meeting, our Community Garden, and then an opportunity to see the horses.
- We're going to start an event on the first Sunday starting in May. It will be like a "Cars & Coffee" type thing where you can bring your special car, and we will serve coffee and donuts, et cetera.

Mr. Berkheiser – I read somewhere about the Community Garden stuff. Are you leasing? Will you have pre-drawn 10x10 squares?

Ms. Ray – Yes, and you will see that at the meeting. They will be able to pick their plots. It will be pre-drawn.

Discussion of the Community Garden details continued, including preparation of the garden sites. The sites will be mowed and kept clean, but the gardeners are in charge of rototilling their own plots.

Lakes Area Hawks – Andy Graham

Mr. Graham shared the following with the Committee.

- We are also into registration right now.
- Once it warms up and we can get the water on, we have noticed that on Field #7, we believe we have a broken sprinkler pipe that is causing a sink hole. We want to get in and repair that before the baseball season kicks off.
- We did have some vandalism on the back of the building. Again, once we get the water back on, we will get that removed.
- We haven't set any dates yet for spring cleanup, but we will do that at our next board meeting.

No representatives were present at the meeting for the following leagues:

- *Lakes Athletics Association*
- *Motor City Mountain Bike Association*
- *CW3 Soccer*

>As of 6:10pm, Chairperson Walker had arrived. Petsch handed the meeting over.

ITEM 2: TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORT

Mr. Berkheiser provided the following:

- We did not have a Parks meeting in January.
- For informational purposes, the Township is exploring a rental inspection program. If you have a rental property, there is a certain checklist, and you need to make sure things are working in your rental. Some people on the board believe it is a business, so it's not necessarily private like residential.
- As you know, the 5-Year Parks Master Plan that we reviewed in December was approved at the January meeting.

Director England – We were approved to purchase picnic tables.

Mr. Berkheiser – Yes, that was at the last meeting.

- At the February meeting, we approved the purchase of ADA picnic tables. Those are being looked at.
- Also, starting the project over at Union Lake for the ADA accessible kayak launch. That was also approved.
- They also approved the pathway in front of the Richardson Center to go to the west, and at the pickleball court. They are still evaluating the pathway to the east.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – The kayak launch and the parking across the street; how are we handling that?

Mr. Berkheiser – The kayak launch; we will see as they're approaching it. The original vision was that there would be one or two drop off spots on the lakeside, and the rest of it would be handicap parking, as that is the intent of it. We have a Boy Scout who has been approved to make canoe or kayak racks so people can put their kayak there while they park across the street. The parking across the street won't be redone, but it will be gravel and level. It will only be for that. There are still rocks there and you won't launch boats or jet skis.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – How are we going to handle ingress/egress to that?

Mr. Berkheiser – Same as it has been for years.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Normally we had a DNR person there.

Mr. Berkheiser – I don't know what you mean by that because they didn't control who came in and who went out.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Cars used to be lining up along Union Lake Road.

Mr. Berkheiser – Because that was the only boat launch. I don't know what we will have there. I guess we'll have to wait and see.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – So we don't have a plan at this point for traffic.

Mr. Berkheiser – At this point, there is no plan to have someone monitor and work that area.

Director England – I don't foresee a problem.

Discussion continued regarding the history of traffic issues at that launch site.

ITEM 3: PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT REPORT

Director England discussed the following:

- The majority is on the agenda and on the written report in the packet.
- We are gearing up for the warmer months. Obviously the sunshine is bringing more people out.

- We are currently in our tax season and all of our tax preparation appointments are booked.
- People are eager to start playing pickleball, but we have to keep the courts closed until any chance of cold weather has passed.
- We are going to have outhouses delivered to Scarlet's.

Mr. Berkheiser – On the pickleball courts, wasn't there some maintenance that had to be done?

Director England – They had to order all new posts, which are here. When they put the nets back up, those will be put in too by our maintenance crew.

Mr. Berkheiser – So if our maintenance guys do it, it won't affect any warranties?

Director England – No. The company that did the surfacing is going to come back out because we had some small hairline cracking around the posts. That will be fixed. They had to wait until it warmed up.

Mr. Berkheiser – We have the Lebowski Law Firm listed as the attorney. Is that something that we don't use our own attorneys for?

Director England – They specialize in elder care and ours don't.

Mr. Krueger – For the park, what did you say about the bathrooms?

Director England – We're going to have outhouses delivered until the weather warms up enough that they can open those restrooms. The temperatures are still getting too cold at night for them to open the restrooms at this point.

Mr. Krueger – There were tons of people there yesterday and today.

Director England – We have had unexpected warm temperatures so we will have them delivered for sure.

ITEM 4: PARK LIAISON REPORTS

Berkheiser – Wise Woods & Victory Park

Director England – Bob, I can give your update. We are finishing the design work for the dog park section of the park. Actually, I went out today and visited Red Oaks, Lyon Oaks, Novi, West Bloomfield and Milford dog parks to look at how they're set up, the fencing and the type of access they had into the parks. I learned a lot. We are going to have to pull the fence up a little bit just because it got too far into brush and we don't want to do a lot of clearing. It's fine and I think the size will still be the same. We are hoping to finalize that information by the end of this week so we can finalize construction documents and get that project bid out.

Mr. Berkheiser – It is still getting used, just from a parking lot point-of-view. We need to do more on the south side of the road. They're still parking up into the woods because they don't want to park and walk across which, to some extent, I agree with. So, we need to get that project moving along.

Ms. Waterworth – I have a question on the Wise Woods park side. We have designated parking spots with two poles in the ground, and then there's a board that goes across. There are several that are broken. Are we going to replace those?

Director England – Mark replaces them.

Discussion continued regarding issues at Wise Woods and how they will be addressed.

Schwartz – Byers and Mill Race

- Nothing new to report.

Vecellio – Long Park & Snowy Ridge Park

- Snowy Ridge; I sent you an email about the fact that it looked like people were doing donuts in the middle of the hill. I don't even know how they got in there. They must have just gone over the parking blocks. Is that a normal occurrence in the winter?

Director England – Yes. We have had discussion about putting up a split-rail fence. They are still getting around the blocks.

Vecellio –

- As far as Long Park, I noticed there is the one north lookout stand that has two steps to it. The other stands don't have any steps, they just have ramps. At the one with two steps, it might be good to put handrails on either side, especially for the winter when it's slippery.
- Also, I was talking to different people as I was walking through the parks and I don't know if we've ever done this before, but I told them how to get to my email online. I don't know if there have ever been any thoughts on having cards.

Discussion continued regarding business cards, QR codes, and communications with residents.

Walker – Maple Glen

- Maple Glen has been very quiet.
- There were people there, but it's not crazy yet like it will be in the summer.

Petsch – Bicentennial Park

- Looking forward to the spring so we can move forward.

Director England – That is ready to go out to bid. We had a lot of discussion about the tennis courts and the pickleball courts. We're not going to be able to save the fencing because of the way it was designed. We're moving forward with new fencing, one tennis court, and we're reducing it from 4 pickleball courts to 2, just because of the noise and it's a neighborhood park. The basketball court is going to be increased to a full-size court. We're looking at the possibilities of redoing that baseball field over there. That will be done here in the next month.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – What are we doing with the portion that was the old Township Hall?

Director England – That will just be grass.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – So we can probably put some playscapes or something else in that eventually.

Krueger – Dodge Park

- I was at Dodge Park a couple of times. Over the weekend, there were lots of people in there.
- When you first come in, and I don't know how it happened, but a couple of the really big boulders got pushed from the side into the middle.
- This time, I actually walked around the soccer fields just to see what things looked like. The one thing I noticed the most ... I don't know if we're responsible for pulling out the silt fence. When you walk around the other soccer fields, the transition point from the field to the woods is pretty nice.

Director England – Silt fence on Field #3; they should have taken that out.

Mr. Krueger – Right. And I'm not sure, but it looks like there's an old goal and other things there.

Director England – They store those there and they'll get used.

Mr. Krueger – All right. I also noticed on the path, once you get close to the Library, on the dirt path going past the Library and that bridge, there's a tree down.

Director England – Okay.

Mr. Krueger – I know they're going to do their spring cleanup, but it's already looking pretty good.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Did we hear anything from lacrosse?

Director England – We actually did get an email from lacrosse on Thursday or Friday. They're asking for more information. I can send them the appropriate information that they need to get to us so they can utilize Bicentennial.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Okay, great. Thank you.

Waterworth – Hickory Glen Park

- The park is busy with mountain bikers and walkers.

Ms. Waterworth initiated discussion with Director England regarding graffiti and tree management at the Parks. Director England noted that Hickory Glen had been done, but a forestry review of Wise Woods has never been done. Mr. Krueger added that he would have input when discussions take place regarding trimming trees.

ITEM 5: VILLAGE OF WOLVERINE UPDATE

Ms. Waterworth discussed the following with the Committee:

- The Village of Wolverine is having their Bunny Lunch on Saturday, March 23rd at 12:00pm at the Richardson Center. Do you have their flyer?

Director England – We do not.

Ms. Waterworth – Okay, I can get it to you. They can register online by Thursday, March 21st. There are no walk-ins. They will have pizza and desserts, crafts and an egg hunt.

ITEM 6: MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Director England – Mark wanted me to let you know that he's very upset he can't be here today, but he is busy setting up for the election.

ITEM 7: OPEN SPACE MILLAGE

Director England – The Township Board approved for the millage to go on the August ballot. We have a lot of new people here, so I wanted to give you some educational material about the millage and what we can and can't do. That's in your packet to read and we don't have to go over that now.

Basically, the rule of thumb is that you can talk about the millage and tell people it's coming up; however, you can't tell people to vote yes or no for the millage. You can say, "I support the millage.", but you can't tell them what to do. You can show your support and talk about it. You just can't use Township funds or resources to promote that to be approved.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – But we can discuss the different projects that the millage has funded.

Director England – Correct, you can talk about the millage.

Mr. Berkheiser – Anything factual we can talk about, positive or negative. Factual is that if it doesn't pass, there are certain things that won't get done in the future.

Director England – If any questions come up, or if you have ideas, just ask and we will get the answer for you so that we make sure we are doing everything correctly.

Ms. Vecellio – Are we able to use the email addresses that people sent us from the survey to communicate with them, for factual stuff?

Director England – For factual stuff, yes. If somebody emails you and asks you a factual question, you can answer that.

Ms. Vecellio – What about sending, from the Township, an informational email to those people who filled out the survey? I feel like those people are active because they have answered our survey.

Director England – That's a good question, and I think we could.

Ms. Waterworth – You could just say, “Thank you for being a member of the community and for visiting the parks. In August, there is a millage vote.”

Ms. Vecellio – Yes, and “Here’s what’s happening in your parks.” Maybe we send information of what’s happening this year.

Mr. Berkheiser – I would suggest you make a flyer that has factual information on there as to what the millage supports, and obviously something about if it passes, what we can do, and if it doesn’t pass, what happens; just factual information. Let the lawyer look at it and then send it out as a blast.

Director England – I like that idea. And even if it’s just a Q&A, we can post that to the website and Facebook and share it.

Ms. Waterworth – I like the idea of saying what happens if it passes and what happens if it doesn’t.

Mr. Berkheiser – If it doesn’t go through, it probably will not make it onto the November election ballot.

Director England – Yes, so anything like that, please get a hold of me so we can get answers.

Ms. Vecellio – So who would put a communication like that together?

Director England – We would.

ITEM 8: PARK IMPROVEMENT UPDATES

Director England discussed the following with the Committee.

- I basically gave you the updates for Victory Park and Bicentennial Park.
- The Oakley Park pathway was approved, as Bob said, and they want to start work as soon as the weather breaks which is great.
- The bathrooms at Maple Glen; they’ve got new floors. They’re getting repainted this week, toilets have been ordered, along with new doors for the dividers. If something happens, or something does not come in, I will make sure there are outhouses over there, but everything should be ready for the season to start. Some of the project has been contracted, and some will be done by our maintenance staff.

ITEM 9: PARK EVENT UPDATES

Director England – Allison made this amazing flyer. This gives you everything that is coming up.

- For the Easter event, we’re taking reservations by email as there is limited space.
- People are already signing up for our M-5K.
- We’re waiting on one band for the concerts and then we’ll release that.
- October 25th will be our Trail-or-Treat at Dodge.
- December 7th will be our 3rd Annual Christmas Tree Lighting.

- This year, you will see the dates for our pickleball tournaments. In addition, we are scheduling classes for beginners and intermediates, as well as kids' clinics for the summer.

Chairperson Walker – Are you going to put that on the website and Facebook so we can share it?

Director England – Yes.

Mr. Berkheiser – Do people sign-up online for those things?

Director England – We have found a way that we can do that and we're getting better about it.

Mr. Berkheiser – Doesn't our new web page allow that?

Director England – It does not. We are looking at software that will make it even easier than what we're doing now. We have learned things through the Library on how to use Google Docs. That works great until we get to a point of almost full, then we have to turn it off and have them contact us directly.

ITEM 10: OTHER MATTERS

Mr. Krueger – I would like to bring up about the ordinance where you can't have electric assisted bicycles. We talked about that once quite a while ago. I'm in the process of buying one and I would sure like to be able to visit Dodge Park and places where I don't have to pedal. I'm not looking for the higher end, but I guess they have different ranges.

Mr. Berkheiser – So, there's a pedal assist, which means it won't go anywhere unless you pedal, but it will help you on hills. Then there's the kind that is basically nothing more than an electric golf cart or moped.

Ms. Vecellio – There are different classes and I believe that the Airline Trail restricts the classes.

Mr. Berkheiser – Right, and they're different speeds. I do not think we restrict the type of bikes. We restrict the speed.

Director England – Yes.

Mr. Berkheiser – Technically speaking, you probably need a pedal assist bike. It would be hard for anyone to enforce that, but they can enforce the speed, and that should be on any bike. It doesn't have anything to do with it being electric.

Director England – To update you about the actual ordinance, it hasn't been completed yet. We are going to be updating that ordinance in a lot of areas, not just the bikes. We're trying to make sure we address everything. I'd be happy to bring that back next month so we can have further discussion on it.

Mr. Krueger – Okay, because on the sign by the ball diamonds, it specifically says “No Motor-Operated Bicycles”. It doesn’t say anything about classes or anything.

Director England – Does it say bicycles or vehicles?

Mr. Krueger – Bicycles. I actually took a picture of it.

Ms. Kennedy – Which park?

Mr. Krueger – Hickory Glen. Here’s the picture.

Ms. Waterworth – It’s on the kiosk.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – On the electric bikes, all are going to come fully operational by just using the throttle, with pedal assist or not, so you can ride it as a regular bike. You make that physical selection on your bike by clicking a button depending on how you want to use it. You can tell if somebody is not pedaling and they’re zipping along, obviously they’re not using pedal assist. But they all come that way. You’re not going to find a bike that’s only pedal assist.

Mr. Berkheiser – That’s not true, I have one.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Really, because when we researched them they had that other option. You had to click it in to make it happen.

Mr. Berkheiser – This one, I can’t.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – You can’t just turn your throttle?

Mr. Berkheiser – My wife said no.

Ms. Waterworth – Regardless of the ordinance, wasn’t it that there was going to be no e-bikes on the mountain bike trails? Only on the paved path. On the paved path at Hickory Glen, you can ride an e-bike, but as soon as you go on the mountain bike trail, you can’t.

Director England – Correct.

Mr. Berkheiser – There is concern that it will tear the trail up. I have an additional other matter. We put lights up on Byers and on Richardson. I thought they looked really good.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – I do too.

Mr. Berkheiser – Have we thought about bringing them down?

Director England – I think they’re coming down on March 8th or by the 16th. I’ll reach out to them.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – I think it looked really nice, and we ought to address this down the road for permanent, programmable, remote controlled lights that are available. You can use them or not, but you can do color themes. We should look into that.

Mr. Schantz – At the Byers location, they had an extension cord along the lawn. When it comes to cutting the grass, eventually that would be an issue.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Those are going to come down, but I'm talking about if we do that, on the Richardson Center and Byers, they would be permanently wired into the building and controlled by Friends of Byers, or staff at Richardson, and they can coordinate with events.

Mr. Schantz – Currently, we have them on a timer.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Yes, and this would be done through a control box and a remote. They are permanent, programmable lights that are non-intrusive. You don't see them. They're LED and they're really neat.

Mr. Berkheiser – Emily will follow up with them and look at what options are available.

The next Parks and Recreation Meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2024, at 6:00PM at the Township Hall.

ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Petsch, supported by Krueger, to adjourn the meeting at 6:40pm.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Krystal Schwartz, Secretary