

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

*Monday, September 25, 2023  
2009 Township Drive  
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390*

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairperson Walker called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

**ROLL CALL:** **Present:** Johnny Walker, Chairperson  
William Petsch, Vice Chairperson  
Bob Berkheiser  
Krystal Schwartz  
Ron Krueger

**Absent:** Barbara Garbutt, Secretary (excused)  
Laura Waterworth (excused)

**Also Present:** Emily England, Dir. of Senior Services/Parks & Recreation  
Allison Kennedy, Asst. to Parks & Recreation Director  
Mark Schoder, Maintenance Director  
George Weber, Township Board Trustee  
Larry Gray, Township Supervisor

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

Director England shared the following with the Committee, submitted by Christine Utter:

*I love to bike, but frankly I'm scared to ride on our streets. Our family just moved to Commerce Township from Royal Oak in July where there are bike lanes and sidewalks. I watch bikers balancing on the narrow strip of pavement between the solid white lines and the gravel/dirt portion of the road while cars drive past at 50mph. I watch children walking on the sides of the roads after school as well. My family bikes and walks now far less often because there are no accommodations made on the roads for our safety. I know that there is a pathway plan, but I'm asking that this plan be given a higher priority for the sake of all of our health and wellbeing.*

Director England – I will pass this along to our Pathways work group as well.

Mr. Berkheiser – I would ask that it also be shared with the Township Board.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**MOTION** by Petsch, seconded by Schwartz, to approve the August 28, 2023, Parks and Recreation Committee Regular & Special Budget Meeting Minutes, with amendments to the Regular meeting minutes as follows:

1. Page 6, bottom of page, Ms. Waterworth's comment: *I remember Karen had mentioned something about materials **missing**.*
2. Page 16: *The next Parks and Recreation Meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 28, 2023, at 7:00PM, at the Richardson Center. September 25, 2023, at 7:00PM, at the Township Hall.*

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chairperson Walker opened to Public Comments.

No comments.

Chairperson Walker closed to Public Comments.

**ITEM 1: EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT – CONNOR WHITE**

Connor White introduced himself and delivered a presentation. He is part of Troop 170 out of the Multi Lakes Conservation Association. He has been a scout since first grade starting with Pack 164. Throughout his journey, he has tried to follow the rules and laws of scouting. He has chosen to support Byers Farm as he understands the importance of supporting the community.

Mr. Berkheiser – Where is Pack 164?

Connor White – They moved around some, but it was at the local Church of Christ by Pontiac Trail.

Connor reviewed the photos he had provided in the Committee’s packet, showing Eagle Scout projects at Byers, including:

- Fixing and refinishing 6-8 benches: these will all be stripped and all of the hardware will be repaired; any damaged wood will be replaced; all hardware and wood will be repainted and sealed. Not pictured are two green benches in front of the barn that will also be repainted.
- Skirting on the small red shed: adding skirting with an angled edge for water runoff, which will be stained red to match the shed.

Mr. Berkheiser – How are you attaching the skirting?

Connor White – I'm assuming it will be bolted or screwed to attach it to the shed. He did not really give specifics. He just wanted us to build a skirting. I'm waiting for more information.

Mr. Berkheiser – Okay, so you're going to research how to attach it?

Connor White – Yes.

Mr. Berkheiser – Okay.

Connor White continued:

- Water pumps: All of the water pumps will be stripped clean, prepped, repainted white and sealed.
- Shed wall panel: The back of the shed was damaged by an animal, so that will be replaced and stained.

Mr. Berkheiser – So, you have to get this approved from a bunch of different areas, and this is just one of them. Have you talked to your troop, and has your scout master and committee chairman looked at this yet?

Connor White – The scout master has looked at it. He's right there. So far, this is the first stop.

Mr. Berkheiser – You haven't talked to the committee person, and then you would have to go talk to the council or district person.

Connor White – Yes, I have not done that yet.

Mr. Berkheiser – How do you plan on fundraising?

Connor White – Bottle drives, maybe a little bit of my own money and anything I can do to raise money.

Mr. Berkheiser – Okay, you have to have that in there when you talk to Mr. Payne. When do you plan on trying to do it?

Connor White – I want to start working on it soon because I'm 17. I turn 18 in August next year.

Mr. Berkheiser – You have to do all of your paperwork and then your fundraising, so my guess is springtime, right?

Connor White – Yes.

Mr. Krueger – Do you have an estimate on the cost?

Connor White – I have not done any estimates yet because I wanted to get my approval for it first.

Mr. Berkheiser – If you don't raise the amount of money, are you going to not do some of it? You're on a timeline too.

Connor White – I will use my own money. Right now, I'm unemployed because of recent surgery, but I'm hoping to start working again soon and start making money again.

Mr. Berkheiser – If you go with the troop, hopefully they can do some bottle drives. Just don't cross over into somebody else's territory.

**MOTION** by Berkheiser, supported by Petsch, to approve the Eagle Scout Project for Connor White. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Chairperson Walker added that he is Connor's committee chair and he had suggested Byers for the Eagle Scout Project.

**ITEM 2: LEAGUE AND COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATION REPORT****Lakes Area Hawks Football & Cheer – Pete Lesner**

- I would like to commend the young man (Connor White) for his responsibility and for trying to help out in the community.
- We are well into our 2023 season. Everything is going good, although we'd like to have a few more wins. Things are moving along.
- In the upcoming year, we will have to do some maintenance on the equipment shed. We are budgeting for that.
- All our bills are paid.
- The fields are all kept pretty well.
- I have only heard of one problem. We had some vinyl come loose under a window. Emily sent me a picture. Hopefully that was taken care of.
- After this year, after 30 years, I will be stepping down as president. As I walked in, I got a call from the next president, Andy Graham, who is at the dentist office. I wanted to introduce him tonight. He has been with me for 9 years and he will be taking over running the Hawks in January. Emily, of course I'll be getting with you on whatever legal issues we have. I'll keep close contact with everyone.
- Everything is running great and we're doing really well. We have 4 cheer teams and 4 football teams.
- I want to thank everybody for all their support.

Mr. Berkheiser – We appreciate your service to the young children for that. Some folks say they're stepping down, and yet they come back, so we'll see you next summer I'm sure.

Pete Lesner – I'll be around. My grandson is on the team. Any questions?

Director England – I'll reach out to you.

Pete Lesner – Okay, God bless you.

Chairperson Walker – Here comes a gentleman who retired last year.

**Interlakes Girls Softball – Tim Bailey**

- We had our first meeting of the new season with our new officers and our new president is Sean Sutton.
- Things are getting organized for next year.
- We're getting a quote on new dirt for all 7 fields. If the quote isn't too crazy, we'll try to get that done this fall.
- We have a tournament coming up this weekend and the following weekend; it's kind of a split thing.
- We will be done with our season October 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Friends of Byers – Dean & Karen Schantz**

- We had the walk-through today.
- We did the east side of the barn at a cost of \$5,000 and 50 man hours to do that. I think it came out pretty well. We got a lot of compliments from the residents. We want to do the north side next year, so we will have to get funding for that.

- A week and a half ago, we hosted the Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce for an impromptu tour of the farmhouse and barn. They were very impressed and they like the heritage of Commerce Township.
- Right now, we're doing the Boo-Bash. We have that planned out.
- Looking forward to the Christmas event, we have the Deputy Director of Oakland County Parks & Rec to be our Santa Claus again this year. He did a good job last year. We hope to get a big turnout.

Mr. Berkheiser – Dean, when you do the painting, these are the areas that we can partner with you as a group, to maybe purchase the paint, and you provide the labor. So that cuts down the cost.

Dean Schantz – That would be fantastic. Wood materials and things like that too?

Mr. Berkheiser – Whatever is needed for the barn, from a repair or safety type of standpoint, I think the Township would be willing to help with that. Work with Emily on that.

Dean Schantz – That will speed things up too, as far as restoration is concerned. Thanks.

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

- *Lakes Athletics Association*
- *Motor City Mountain Bike Association*
- *Commerce Little League*
- *CW3 Soccer*

### **ITEM 3: TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORT**

Mr. Berkheiser provided the following:

- We had a meeting on August 8<sup>th</sup>. There are a couple things that are probably appropriate for this group.
- We are getting information for the GFL contract. Our trash contract runs out at the end of next year. It takes a while if we are making changes. We're reaching out to them and working on some things.
- We are also working on some snow plow contracts. The SAD for that has been initiated.
- We approved moving forward with a new concessionaire for the Wixom Road property. We have a meeting tomorrow to review the concessionaire agreement. We hope by the next Township Board meeting, we will have a new concessionaire that will start slowly doing things over at the Horse Farm again. There's a lot of things that need to be done; fences, grass seed, et cetera, to make it safe for the horses. And, there are some issues in the barn too, but we will look at all of that.
- We been spending a lot of time on the Township budget. We have several meetings coming up and we'll be working on the budget.

**ITEM 4: PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT REPORT**

Ms. England discussed the following:

- The majority of my items are on your written report.
- We are having a Senior Health Expo on October 12<sup>th</sup> which will allow seniors an opportunity to get flu shots.
- The 14 Mile pathway is near completion. Hopefully, they should be finishing the work next week.
- Bicentennial and Victory Park will go to the Board next month to get approval to seek bids. I'll keep you updated on that.
- Officially, as of September 1<sup>st</sup>, the County has taken over the contract with People's Express. We still use the same senior transportation, but the County has now taken over paying the invoices. Our service area has opened up much larger, and the cost to residents per ride has gone down.

Mr. Berkheiser – Our taxes went way up, but the amount they pay for each ride went down.

Director England – Correct.

**ITEM 5: PARK LIAISON REPORTS**

**Berkheiser – Wise Woods & Victory Park**

- We are working on the issues at the parks.
- The parking lot is still getting lots of use at all times of the day. I think that's good.

**Schwartz – Byers and Mill Race**

- We did our Byers walk-through today.
- With Mill Race, the pond functionality is not working on the back side of the park. And, the bridge on that side as well is uneven and it's starting to sink. It's probably going to need work soon.

**Walker – Maple Glen**

- I went there last week. Everything looked really good.
- There was a ton of people there, moving right along with all the sports.

**Petsch – Bicentennial Park**

- The demo is going on.
- Mark, should that area have snow fencing to prevent kids from getting in there?

Mark Schoder – Yes, they put up caution tape. Larry told them to put that up.

Discussion continued regarding addressing safety concerns at the demo site. Vice Chairperson Petsch strongly encouraged that the company doing the demo work be told to secure the area better. It is the responsibility of the demo company to make the site safe.

**Krueger – Dodge Park**

- Dodge Park looks really good.
- I made a couple trips to both Dodge Park and the Library. I was happy to see all the people using it. There were 6-8 families using the play equipment at the Library, and countless people at Scarlet’s playground.

**Garbutt – Long Park & Snowy Ridge Park**

No report.

**Waterworth – Hickory Glen Park**

No report.

Mr. Berkheiser – Can we get a rough idea of what it would cost to replace the bridge?

Director England – At Mill Race?

Mr. Berkheiser – Yes, the back side of that. He went in and dropped the other one in, right?

Director England – Yes, Rousseaux.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – We don't need anything near that size there. That’s a 20-foot bridge.

Mr. Berkheiser – No, it’s probably a little bit more than that, but ...

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Maybe if we bought an aluminum section bridge and laid it across, or something of that nature.

Director England – I’ll get some options and prices. Mark, can you help me with that?

Mark Schoder – Yes.

**ITEM 6: VILLAGE OF WOLVERINE UPDATE**

No report.

**ITEM 7: MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT**

Mark Schoder discussed the following with the Committee:

- The pavilion pad at Long Park is all done. It was about 26 yards. We also finished up the landscaping and put in crushed stone up to the bridge.
- The big walking bridge; we started repairs on that and we cleaned up the graffiti. We hope to have that done by the end of next week.
- We started cutting the vines at Scarlet’s today. We also cleaned up some more brush.
- The leaves are falling and the trails are getting full of them. We will walk the trails with our backpack blower and keep them clean so they’re not slippery.

**ITEM 8: INTERLAKES BATHROOM**

Director England – I may need Mark’s assistance on this too. This is on the agenda. It’s something we talked about budgeting for next year. Mark and I met over at the facility. I want it to be known that the Township owns that bathroom facility. We built the bathroom facility part with the understanding that we would maintain that piece of the building. The league built the concession piece of it and they maintain that side. It’s been years since that has been updated. It needs new fixtures. The floor needs epoxy. We talked about redoing the roof.

Time wise, we would like to get moving on some of that now. Even though it is budgeted for 2024, we’d like to do some of that now. I’m bringing it here because we do still have money in our capital outlay for 2023, so it would be a budget amendment as far as the project goes. We had money that we originally put for park benches, but we were able to include those in the project over at the Richardson Center for the pickleball courts. So, we don’t actually need those benches and we could utilize some of that funding to get some of this work done this year.

I’m asking if you are okay with that, and then Mark and I can move forward with getting pricing on the epoxy flooring. Were you looking at plumbing, or just fixtures?

Mark Schoder – We need the fixtures. The plumbing should be fine. The sinks have to be replaced.

Mr. Berkheiser – It’s about ready to be winterized, so this would be the time to do it and then it’s ready in the spring.

Director England – Correct. I pulled our budget to make sure; the project would be an amendment, but the money is still there.

Mr. Berkheiser – I think getting the prep work done is a good idea.

Mark Schoder – We need to get the epoxy floors in before it gets too cold.

Mr. Berkheiser – That’s why you have big heaters. Just crank them up.

Chairperson Walker – That will not work. The concrete will not warm.

Director England – I didn’t want to take this to the Township Board without bringing it here to make you aware of it.

Chairperson Walker – So we’re talking epoxy floors, fixtures, sinks. Now you mentioned the roof?

Director England – The roof can wait. That’s not immediate. That won’t hold anything up, but it is getting near where it needs to be replaced, so we talked about putting a metal roof on it to avoid the moss that’s growing on it.

Chairperson Walker – Would we cover the whole roof in that instance?

Mr. Berkheiser – It’s our building.

Director England – We would do the whole roof.

**MOTION** by Petsch, supported by Schwartz, to proceed with upgrades to the Interlakes Building Bathroom Facilities at Maple Glen Park, not to exceed the amount originally budgeted in the Capital Outlay for 2023 of \$15,000.

Discussion –

Petsch – What are we looking at?

England – We budgeted \$25,000 for 2024, but that included the roof.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**ITEM 9: PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

Director England discussed the following with the Committee:

- This is a placeholder on the agenda. If anyone here wants to make a comment with respect to the Master Plan, please do so.
- I read comments earlier under Communications. (See Page 1, Christine Utter regarding prioritizing pathways).
- I did receive a draft of the Master Plan yesterday. We have a meeting with Leah on Thursday to go over that and then we will be presenting that to the Committee.

Mr. Berkheiser – As soon as you get it and it's at a point where you're happy with it, send it out earlier than when we get the agenda packet. I'd appreciate that.

Director England – I'll send it out.

**ITEM 10: OPEN SPACE MILLAGE**

Director England – This is a placeholder.

**ITEM 11: 2024 MEETING DATES**

Chairperson Walker – Do I need to read these, or just accept?

Director England – As long as you review and accept, I think I caught all of the holidays. The May and December meetings were moved up a week. The August meeting is held at the Richardson center.

**MOTION** by Krueger, supported by Schwartz, to accept the 2024 Parks & Recreation Meeting Calendar as presented. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**ITEM 12: PARK EVENT UPDATES**

Director England discussed the following with the Committee:

- Upcoming, we have our recreational pickleball tournament on October 7<sup>th</sup> from 10am-2pm. We had 40 spots available and we have 39 participants right now. I think we were half full after only one day of advertising.
- We have our Trail or Treat event on October 27<sup>th</sup>.
  - We're joining with the Commerce Township Library to do that.
  - We are currently seeking businesses to set up a table and hand out candy. We currently have 21 businesses or residents who have committed to handing out candy.

- The Maintenance Department is helping us light that path and set up a spooky trail for the younger children.
- The Library will be doing some kids' activities.

Mr. Berkheiser – What path?

Director England – It's the dirt path.

Mr. Berkheiser – By the Library?

Director England – Correct, when you cross the bridge to come over. It's a short path. I appreciate all the help that the Maintenance Department is giving us on that.

- We look forward to our M5-K and we want to set a date for that.
- Also, we need to set our concert dates.
- For next year, we're looking at possibly doing three pickleball tournaments in June, August and October.
- Our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Christmas Tree Lighting event is December 2, 2023.

Discussion took place regarding the Christmas event, lighting, the sound system, location of the fire truck, et cetera.

Chairperson Walker discussed the pickleball tournaments with Director England. She noted that one of the instructors is doing the upcoming recreational tournament, and he will provide the format. Therefore, next year, the recreational tournaments could be handled in-house. For other tournaments that are for intermediate and advanced players, she would seek help from the instructors.

### **ITEM 13: OTHER MATTERS**

Ms. Schwartz – I wanted to give an update on a statement that was made at the last meeting. Missing items from Friends of Byers have been located on the Byers property. Emily, can we set up a procedure and/or document to itemize and track things that are donated to our parks?

Director England – We are working on that. We currently have a catalog of all items on the property that belong to the Township. We have pictures and descriptions. We will go back through that and update it regularly. Moving forward, we will have a process for any items that are put in the house specifically. They will be cataloged with pictures so we know what was put in there and when. That will be attached to the agreement.

Mr. Berkheiser – I have another matter. I'd like you to put a placeholder for the handicap launch at Union Lake. I would like to get that moving. I think with our renewal process, the more we can do that a lot of people see is good.

Director England – I do have an update to that. We have CDBG funding that was originally budgeted for that project. I was in contact with our CDBG representatives from the County last week. Initially, when they submitted everything for that project, it came back that we needed to have a wildlife biologist do a study of that lake. Since then, the

process has changed. They re-ran the project. We have to wait 30 days for the outcome. If they don't respond, we no longer have to move forward with the wildlife biologist, which will lower the cost of the project. I'm working with Jason at Giffels to get a cost estimate on doing the ADA accessible kayak launch, as well as resurfacing the lakeside parking lot. This does not include the parking lot across the street. I will keep you updated on that.

Discussion continued regarding the design of the kayak launch.

**The next Parks and Recreation Meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 23, 2023, at 7:00PM at the Township Hall, after visiting Wise Woods & Victory Park.**

**ITEM 14: ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** by Petsch, supported by Krueger, to adjourn the meeting at 7:37pm.

Discussion –

Berkheiser – We have several Troop 308 Scouts here tonight for their merit badges. They have put a lot of time into our Parks and service hours into Commerce Township, Byers, et cetera. I would like them to be officially recognized in the minutes.

Walker – Thank you very much.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

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Barbara Garbutt, Secretary