

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

Regular Meeting at 7:00PM

February 21, 2018

ARTICLE I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Michelle Sall called the regular Parks & Recreation Commission meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Sall welcomed Tom Shuff as a new board member. Shuff is originally from Chicago and now resides in Laketown Township in Forest Beach.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michelle Sall, Ryan Bosscher, Karen Simmons,
Jim Johnson, Tom Shuff
MEMBERS ABSENT: None
STAFF PRESENT: Diane Ybarra – Recording Secretary

ARTICLE II. CITIZEN COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mary Lynn Webster of 6630 Halcyon Hills asked for the microphones to be turned on and up.

Sall reported that a letter was submitted by Mitra Delaney addressing the following items: 1) Spring clean-up date for Huyser Farm; 2) Chef Container service be suspended in all parks for the months of December, January, February and March; 3) Remove the shuffle board at Wolters Woods and replace with grass; 4) Replace the multiple signs at Wolters Woods with one larger sign. She also thanked the board for not creating a dog park in the township.

An email was received from Budd Star proposing the formation of a “Friends of Laketown Beach” to include fundraising, stair repair at the beach and potentially lease the beach to the south.

An email was received from Jeff Johnson and Beth Peter of 6149 147th Avenue expressing appreciation for the snowplowing of the bike paths.

ARTICLE III. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approval of Minutes

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Bosscher and seconded by Simmons to approve the January 17, 2018 minutes as written. 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 January 2018 were reviewed. Maintenance: Veldhof – \$400.00; Contracted Services: John Kunkel - \$155.00; Electricity - \$46.88; Salaries: Robert Jerow - \$180.00; Payroll - \$275.00; Taxes: \$34.82.

Johnson reviewed the monthly bills for January and said everything looked to be in order. Simmons commented on the maintenance expense. Bosscher said we are under budget year to date by \$26,890.84.

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

ARTICLE V. TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORTS – Johnson

- a. Johnson reported that he provided an update on parks regarding the ODC partnership programs. A contract with consultant, Fresh Coast Planning from Grand Haven was approved to work with the Planning Commission on the Master Plan project.

ARTICLE VI. STAFF REPORTS – No report

ARTICLE VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. GRANTS IN PROGRESS

Sall reported that no updates have been given on the grants in progress.

ARTICLE VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. LAKETOWN BEACH – IDEA FROM BUDD STAR

Bosscher explained the email submitted by Budd Starr and his proposal to establish a non-profit board of residents for beach improvements. Starr has established an on-line website

to raise funds for the beach. The committee would also be able to organize volunteers to work at the beach. Starr would like to promote Friends of Laketown Beach including fundraising. Bosscher asked for feedback.

Shuff asked for clarification of the Go Fund Me page and Bosscher said no funds have been collected and a 501(c)(3) has not been established. Shuff said the township would have to be involved and approve what is done.

Johnson said input and feedback should be obtained from Meshkin along with guidance from the township attorney. Johnson said it is great that a resident is interested in promoting the plans for the beach but what Starr may not be aware of is the history of what is currently underway.

Sall said the 501(c)(3) information must be known before anything can move forward for approval.

Simmons likes the proposal but some of the ideas warrant more discussion.

Bosscher suggested it be added to the tax bill as an option for donation as is the Friends of the Felt. Sall confirmed that Bosscher would communicate with Starr.

Bosscher added that Howard Bouwens, a resident of Halcyon Hills would like to see fencing on the south side of the beach property to deter trespassing and better define the lot lines. Bouwens also requested that the parking be limited. He is in favor of leasing a portion of the association beach albeit, many of the neighbors may not be in support of that. Simmons asked if there have been fences in the past to define the property lines. Simmons said it is tough because we do not have police patrol.

Tom O'Neal of Halcyon Hills said Laketown Township beachgoers are not good neighbors. There is a legal document stating the township will supply police protection and that has not happened. There will be a big fight from the association over expansion of the beach. O'Neal said he has been here since 1993 and it has always been a problem. A call to the Michigan State Police is the only way to remove trespassers. The county sheriff does nothing. Sall and Simmons said the residents have voted against police protection in the township. O'Neal said the beach is overused now and it will only increase the problem. The deed restriction states the township will police the beach and this has not happened. Why ask for a grant to make the problem bigger than it already is? Simmons said she personally has not been made aware of the problems.

Carrie Rogers O'Neal said she stopped coming to the meetings because nothing has ever been done. In 2003 there was a mixed committee that worked on the issues, but nothing came of it. In 1927 the property was deeded to the township for \$1.00 but with restrictions. O'Neal read a portion of the deed with its restrictions.

Lori Heath of 140th Street expressed concern about expanding the beach and the issues it would bring.

Sall apologized for the issues and suggested installing more signs.

Simmons asked if the residents had suggestions. O'Neal said they have thought about security, but the residents do not feel they should pay for it when the deed clearly states that it is the township's responsibility. The parks in the township are great but you cannot be applying for grants when you are in violation of your own deeds. You are exposing the township to a huge lawsuit.

Heath said there is a beautiful county park near the Felt Mansion and the Saugatuck State Dunes Beach are both nearby. She does not feel Laketown Beach should be expanded.

O'Neal suggested charging a fee to pay for the policing. Ms. O'Neil said she would love to see it limited to Laketown residents only as it had been in the past. Another option would be to dictate capacity by the number of parking spots. O'Neal also suggested installing signs directing people to the other nearby public beaches.

Bosscher said this is an acquisition grant so at this time only to acquire land so residents should not be concerned that a parking lot will be there next summer.

Mary Lou, a resident of Halcyon Hills asked if residents would have input once the land is acquired.

Heath asked how residents can stay up to date on the project.

Shuff said we obviously have a problem and there must be some form of compromise about it and a review the 1927 deed. Shuff said he lives in Forest Beach and they pay for private security.

Simmons asked if the commissioners were aware of the deed and O'Neal said Meshkin is aware of it and has a copy.

Johnson said what was shared tonight is the first time he has heard this and only aware of the younger population crossing over the private areas. The whole concept of trying to get a grant really started with trying to get a solution for the stair issue and the expense to keep the sand off is extremely expensive. Johnson explained the township's intent for the grant and its purpose.

O'Neal said a lot of people will diagonally go back to 142nd from the beach and if the township fixed the stair problem, it would probably help the trespassing issues.

Ms. O'Neal was pleased with the response of the commissioners.

Simmons said the longer it has been ignored, the worse it gets.

Heath said mother nature plays a huge part in this. The population to the reference of the available beach area as it changes is continues to create the issue.

Johnson affirmed that the shoreline is ever changing.

Ms. O'Neal said she does not understand why the inlet cannot be obtained without purchasing the other lots, which are now on the tax rolls and beautiful land.

Sall said one issue is the inaccessibility for a wheel chair ramp. Mary Lou questioned the validity of that. Not every beach has to be handicap accessible. Bosscher said it is also for families with small children and senior citizens or those with mobility issues.

Johnson said one thought for the parking lot expansion has been to reconfigure the spots along the road.

Ms. O'Neal said she read through the grant proposal and there have been a lot of commitments made in the document.

Bosscher said the proposed parking is to create a lot versus roadside spaces.

O'Neal said the Holland Sentinel reported that this project is a 99% approved deal.

Johnson said unfortunately Meshkin is not here to answer some of these questions regarding the grant process.

Mary Lou said what if the property owners do not agree to sell, will the grant go away? Sall and Simmons responded that it would not move forward without the sellers' agreement.

Heath asked if the A-frame homeowners were approached. Johnson said there have been conversations over the years to pursue more property in the area to expand the park area. Heath expressed concern about the additional garbage that more picnic tables would bring. The residents are the only ones picking up the garbage and the dumpsters are overflowing with trash brought in from outsiders. This happens at all the parks so there really should not be extra dumpsters put in place for people who do not want to pay for their own garbage.

Bosscher said Allegan County Road Commission could put out traffic counters to determine high traffic days/times and O'Neal said that would be a great idea. Bosscher said there would be no charge to the township to do so.

B. DELANEY CORRESPONDENCE

Sall asked commissioners to address the points made in the Delaney correspondence.

1. Huyser Farm clean-up – Tom Shuff suggested getting student volunteers from Black River school; Sheri Rabino would like Dan Williams to cut some of the tree limbs and brush before having volunteers on site who could then remove the

- cuttings; Simmons suggested Rabino tag the trees for Williams to cut and then get volunteers on a week-end in early May; Rabino would also like a tiny rundown shed removed and bring in a dumpster for the clean-up; Johnson commented that ;part of the clean-up should include an expert that could give advice on the foliage around the house to preserve the plants/shrubs worth keeping; Rabino will check dates of availability and it was suggested the date be included in the next newsletter.
2. Eliminate Chef Container garbage service for the months of December – March in all parks. Sall will check with Meshkin to see if there is a contract in place and Bosscher suggested having one container per park for those months.
 3. Remove the shuffle board at Wolters Woods and replace with grass along with relocating the benches. Shuff will visit the park to look at the shuffle boards to determine options and report back at the next meeting.
 4. Better signage for Wolters Woods. Shuff will review signage and report back at the next meeting.

ARTICLE IX. CITIZEN COMMENTS

O’Neal reiterated his comments about the 1927 deed and Bosscher asked to make copies for the commissioners.

ARTICLE X. ADJOURNMENT

Sall adjourned the meeting at 8:42 pm.

Michelle Sall, Chair