

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

Regular Meeting at 7:00PM

March 21, 2018

ARTICLE I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Michelle Sall called the regular Parks & Recreation Commission meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michelle Sall, Ryan Bosscher, Karen Simmons,
Tom Shuff
MEMBERS ABSENT: Jim Johnson
STAFF PRESENT: Al Meshkin – Township Manager
Diane Ybarra – Recording Secretary

ARTICLE II. CITIZEN COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mike De Vries of 4612 Pine Drive said he received a notification about preserving the Laketown Beach Park and was surprised in regards to how it was proposed to counter this project and try to stop it from a public standpoint. The beach is on a dead end road which has always given access and everyone has the right to use the public beach. De Vries supported the project and feels it is wrong to deny access. He applauds efforts to make improvement to Laketown Beach.

Fritz Hubner of Halcyon Hills stated that he does not have a problem with making improvements to the beach but questions what is the right amount to spend to improve access. The SEV for this parcel is \$16,000 so the \$500,000 offer is unbelievable. He asked that the township consider setting the offer at a more reasonable offer of market value.

Carrie Rogers O’Neal of Halcyon Hills asked that the commissioners consider the number of constituents being served, evaluate the amount of space and cost per person. The cost of the project seems exorbitant and while there is no millage for parks, police and maintenance of current parks, yet expanding this park is proposed. Rogers O’Neal feels the current parks should be better maintained before expansions are done.

Bill Kazanova of Halcyon Hills said he has many issues but most importantly he is very meticulous about his mail and what information he receives as a citizen. He said he never

received any information about the Laketown Beach grant but read about it in the Holland Sentinel and the winter newsletter. Kazanova questioned the emails and Facebook discussion regarding the grant. Kazanova also said that he never received the parks survey or the results from it. He expressed concern about the lack of communication and feels the grant process should have included residents.

George De Witt stated that he is immediately north and adjacent to the park and will be impacted by the erosion and the Vander Meulen Road properties will also impact us. If there is beach access people will go around even on the private road. De Witt questioned why this came up in the first place because work was done in 2002 to realistically make the parking work based on the size of the lot and the road to control the number of people that could go to the beach. The lake is on the rise again so the amount of beach is not the same as it was in 2002.

Bosscher explained the reason for the project is to correct the issue with the stairs, reconfigure the parking lot to meet emergency responder standards and prevent further erosion of the dune.

Geraldine Reed of Vander Meulen Road stated that she is very disappointed in how Laketown takes care of the beach property with the toilet turned over, garbage on the beach and people trespassing on private property. There are parks in Holland where people have to pay a fee to use and there is no fee for Laketown Beach. There should be someone at the park all the time to address the issues. Residents pay a lot of money for their property and the township does not maintain the park.

Bob Slikkers of 6553 Creekwood asked for information about the survey and expressed concern about the cost of the parcel being purchased. He feels that internet access and not additional parks should be a priority for township spending.

Brian and Naomi Holt of 6625 142nd Avenue stated that they are frequent users of the beach and believe it is important to improve the facilities because the steps are dangerous. Holt expressed concern about adding parking spaces because the beach is already over loaded with the current number of spaces. He also feels that it would increase traffic and there would be more problems with trash, vandalism and the potential for fires if picnic areas are added. He suggested having someone assigned to cleaning the beach on a regular basis. Holt also asked that the township focus its spending on other priorities such as natural gas and internet on his street.

Pierre Jalving of 6575 142nd Avenue said the traffic on the weekends is unreal with drag racing, garbage and the park is not designed for the amount of people that are currently using it. It is obscene and he does not want to pay more taxes to support it and is totally against it.

Laurie Heath of 6526 140th Avenue reported someone unloading trash out of their car into the dumpster at Shore Acres Park and suggested putting a camera up to deal with the violators.

Township Manager Al Meshkin explained the grant and the grant process. The grant is through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. There were public hearings held in late 2016, early 2017 prior to the grant being submitted in April 2017. The project was also mentioned in numerous newsletters. The revenue for the grant comes from oil and gas leases on state property and is not tax money. The state constitution requires a certain amount of the trust fund funds be dispersed every year and the majority is restricted to acquisition grants. The township applied for the grant to purchase five parcels and if issued, monies are restricted for that purpose only. The full property values are not necessarily what would be paid because the landowner could make an in-kind donation to cover a portion of the cost. Purchase of the inholding would not increase capacity of the beach but would improve access to the beach. The state has stringent requirements that require one, potentially two, appraisals on each parcel to determine the true cash value of each parcel. The state will approve grant monies to pay 75% of the appraised value. It will likely be late summer before the status of the grant is known. The intention for the parking lot is to improve parking, not necessarily expand it. In 1980's the park was restricted to residents only but the State Supreme Court found that residents only policy to be discriminatory. If a fee were charged to residents, a slightly higher fee could be charged to non-residents. But if no fees are charged, the park must remain open to everyone. In regards to regular policing of the park, residents voted against the millage to support a township deputy.

Simmons reported that an email was received from Randy and Lisa Eldred of 6567 145th Avenue expressing their objection to the expansion of Laketown Beach along with a list of recommendations for operating the beach in its current state. Letters of objection were also received from the following: Linda Goff of 4671 Pine Drive; Douglas Eldred 4385 64th Street; Robert and Nancy Post of 4592 Jack Pine Drive; Linda Webb of 4579 66th Street; Carolyn Cooper of 6477 146th Avenue; Mark Brummel of 6482 Castle; Lynn Eikhoff of 6430 Hidden Hollow Lane; Mark Bronkhorst of 6505 142nd Street; Sam Martin of 4567 Audubon; Kathleen Abbott of 6406 Hidden Hollow Lane; Marilyn Bamborough of 6680 Audubon Avenue; Craig Smeenge of 3913 64th Street; Randy and Ann Holkeboer of 6482 Maple Lane; Anne Macicak of 3804 65th Street; Lynn Kobes 4057 66th Street; Nancy Edewaard of 4265 64th Street; Maria Burnatowska-Hledin of 6638 Halcyon Drive; Carolyn Hubner of 6736 Halcyon Drive; Bob and Leslie Wessman of 6476 Castle Avenue; Mark and Kris Bruinsma of 6441 Sandcastle Drive; Terry Wickart of 3929 65th Street; Michael Slayton of 4667 Pine Drive; Gerald Perriguy III of 6440 Sand Castle View; Douglas Youngerman of 6465 Sand Castle Drive and two letters submitted by Neighbors for Preserving Our Laketown Parks.

ARTICLE III. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of Minutes

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Simmons and seconded by Bosscher to approve the February 21, 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 February 2018 were reviewed. Maintenance: Veldhof – \$400.00, Chef Container - \$1,726.30, Robert Jerow - \$25.00; Contracted Services: John Kunkel - \$155.00; Electricity - \$48.44; Salaries: Robert Jerow - \$155.00; Taxes: \$13.77.

Simmons reported that Johnson submitted an email stating that he reviewed the monthly bills for February and all were in order.

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

ARTICLE V. TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORTS – Sall

- a. Sall reported that all committee reports were given; Meshkin stated that the amended FY 2017-18 and proposed 2018-19 budgets were approved; Republic Services purchased Chef Container so the township contract was approved accordingly; support resolution for the Saugatuck Township bike path was approved.

ARTICLE VI. STAFF REPORTS – Meshkin

- a. Meshkin stated that there was nothing further to report.
- b. Huyser Caretaker – Sherri Circo Rubino reported that the window in the back of the house was broken; the lock on the back door had been pried open; the doors on the red barn were open again; one window in the basement is just a screen and not an actual window and suggested Plexiglas be installed.

ARTICLE VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. LAKETOWN BEACH

Bosscher reviewed the memo he submitted regarding beach security; beach capacity; trespassing issues; signage.

Commissioners discussed signage, parking spaces, severe beach front erosion, beach capacity, accessibility and condition of the stairs. Meshkin stated that the acquisition of the King property could alleviate the need for the stairs. Bosscher invited residents to provide feedback on signage and fencing options. Shuff suggested signage but no fencing. Sall asked if it would be necessary to consult with the fire department regarding emergency access. Meshkin responded that the emergency responders spend a lot of time on the lake during the summer time and proper access is critical. Following discussion, this item was tabled for further discussion at the next meeting.

B. HUYSER FARM CLEAN-UP

Following discussion, it was determined that the clean-up day will be scheduled for Saturday, May 19. The date will be published in the township newsletter.

C. WOLTERS WOODS IMPROVEMENTS

Shuff reported that the park needs a general spring clean-up; the bathrooms are in terrible shape; the large sign with the incorrect spelling must be removed; the shuffle board cannot be removed due to it being six inches into the ground so suggests that it be repainted for use and the horse shoe area be updated as well. Meshkin added that the shuffle board and horse shoe equipment are available at the township hall. Bosscher suggested resurfacing the large sign to leave in place and Shuff disagreed.

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Shuff and seconded by Simmons to remove the large sign at Wolters Woods. Sall called for a vote on the motion. Vote 2 to 1 to remove the sign. Sall abstained from the vote. MOTION APPROVED**

ARTICLE VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. SPRING PARKS EVALUATIONS

Shuff reported the following on Farview Park: the restroom is in need of major cleaning; the parking lot is heavily rutted; horse manure is in the parking lot and small seating area in front of the structure; trails are in good shape; the seating by the lake is fine; fishing dock was good. Shuff said the biggest issues are the restroom and parking lot.

Following discussion, it was determined that spring park evaluations will be further discussed at the next meeting. Meshkin added that the contractor will begin to survey the parks for invasive species.

A decision was made to have one public meet and greet this year with the date and location to be determined at the next meeting.

ARTICLE IX. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Sall provided a review of all dates and resources that had addressed the survey and grant for beach improvements. There was also a public hearing held to receive feedback on the 5-Year Plan before it was recommended for approval by the township board. The Parks Commission Board has tried to be as transparent as possible.

Bosscher noted that Meshkin covered the questions regarding the grant. Bosscher added that numerous comments had been on a Facebook page which is not administered by the township. Sall addressed the request for a trash can on the beach stating that it is not feasible.

An unidentified resident asked if there was a sub-committee related to the beach project. Bosscher responded that if the property is acquired there is a full process that would have to be followed as Meshkin mentioned earlier. The resident objected to the beach project due to capacity issues and supports signage to redirect beach-goers to other locations.

Bob Slikkers asked what the survey response was and Sall responded 84 respondents of an approximate 2700. Slikkers asked if the survey results are available to review and Sall responded that it is included in the 5-Year Plan which is available on the website and/or from the township office. Meshkin reiterated there would be no tax increase to support the beach project. Slikkers reiterated again, that internet access is more of a priority than the beach project.

Pierre Jalving of 6575 142nd Avenue said Laketown Beach was designed for township people only and the proposed project will not work. Jalving added that 99% influx of the people is not from the township and they are not needed here to increase traffic and speed on the roads.

Carrie Rogers O'Neal of Halcyon Hills appreciated Bosscher's research on the beach project. O'Neal asked if the township is committed to the details of what is noted in the grant if it is approved. Meshkin explained if we accept the grant we have to follow the rules of the State of Michigan. There was further discussion regarding boater and swimmer safety over which O'Neal expressed concern.

Gerry Wyse of 6514 Creekwood questioned the amount of match money the township would have to provide. Meshkin responded that a portion of the match could be reduced by in-kind or cash donations by the property owners and the project would be done in phases. Wyse said he cannot support spending tax money to support the project.

Bill Kazanova from Halcyon Hills spoke in objection to the beach project stating that expanding the beach would only increase the current problems. He asked for more park surveillance. He added that the current parks are not being maintained and feels that should be addressed before adding more park space in the township.

Ethel Barendse of 6404 145th Avenue took offense at being included in the opposition as she is for the project and appreciates the forward thinking of the Parks Commissioners. The people objecting are only thinking of themselves and not the community or their grandchildren. This is an opportunity to leave a treasure for our grandchildren.

Marcia Perry of 6248 Blue Star Highway supports the beach project and reminded citizens that historically, Laketown has not paid for the parks it has as most properties were donated for which we should all be thankful. Perry asked citizens to look at the big picture and longer term plans.

Brian Holt of 6625 142nd Avenue expressed concern regarding the current condition of the beach stairs. Holt also suggested having someone clean the beach on a weekly basis.

Tom O'Neal of Halcyon Hills thanked Bosscher for his research but feels strongly about addressing the trespassing issue.

Betsy Cook of 4185 66th Street expressed concern regarding vandalism and parking issues. Cook also volunteered to be part of the planning committee if the grant is approved.

ARTICLE X. ADJOURNMENT

Sall adjourned the meeting at 9:25 pm.