

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

*Monday, August 28, 2023*

2009 Township Drive  
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

**CALL TO ORDER:** Vice Chairperson Petsch called the meeting to order at 7:01pm at the Ralph C. Richardson Center.

**ROLL CALL: Present:** William Petsch, Vice Chairperson

Bob Berkheiser

Krystal Schwartz

Ron Krueger

Laura Waterworth

**Absent:** Johnny Walker, Chairperson (excused)

Barbara Garbutt, Secretary (excused)

**Also Present:** Emily England, Director of Senior Services/Parks & Recreation

Allison Kennedy, Asst. to Parks & Recreation Director

Mark Schoder, Maintenance Director

Larry Gray, Supervisor

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**MOTION** by Schwartz, seconded by Waterworth, to approve the July 24, 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.

**ITEM 1: LEAGUE AND COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATION REPORT**

**Commerce Little League – Paul Kammer**

- We wrapped up our summer league in July.
- Practices start tonight for our Fall Ball season. Games will be on Saturdays through the end of October.
- Our numbers are still staying strong.
- There will probably be a big turnover on the board in October. I will be stepping down as President. My son is 13 now. I'm staying with the league, but taking a step down.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Summer went well?

Paul Kammer – Yes. All of our teams, 8-13, won District 4 districts. District 4 is all of Oakland County, all of Genesee County, and Commerce Little League won every age group. We went to States in 10's, 11's and 12's. We made the semi-finals in 11's and 12's.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Very good. You guys are doing a great job.

Mr. Berkheiser – As we are into budget season, do you have any projects you're looking at doing?

Paul Kammer – This past year, we re-roofed the dugouts.

Mr. Berkheiser – I'm looking at things that would be considered public, that the public would get use out of when it's not baseball season. The Township can partner with those projects, such as pavilions, picnic areas.

Paul Kammer – I thought that Parks & Rec had a master plan. There was a pavilion talked about at one point.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – With the redesign of the park, and now with the way your parking is, we'd be looking to you to give us some guidance. If we were going to do that, where would you like to see it? In the middle back by the batting cages, or over by the concession stand area? Where would be the most important location where grandparents and people who needed shade could get out there and watch games?

Paul Kammer – Ideally, I think it would be over by the batting cages, almost next to the playground.

Mr. Berkheiser – To me, it needs to be a location where the normal public would use it, when it's not baseball time.

Paul Kammer – Right, next to the playground.

Mr. Berkheiser – I'm just asking you to mull stuff over and think about that.

Paul Kammer – Sure. And I did send a full, league-wide blast when you had the survey. I sent it to every parent in our system asking for their feedback as to what they would like to see in the park. Other things people have talked about are paved pathways through the park, but again, that doesn't probably help the public outside of parents with their wagons, strollers, et cetera. The parking lots are always an issue. Other than that, parents mainly complain about the fields, backstops, fences, and things that are not for you guys.

If we wanted to make changes to the snack shack building, do you guys own the building?

Mr. Berkheiser – Yes, we own the building.

Paul Kammer – We’ve talked about it. On the snack shack side, there was an old drinking fountain that you removed there. It’s right near the entrance. We’d like to consider cutting a new window that would be used for pickup orders. There’s long lines for drinks versus food, and things of that nature.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Anything like that, as long as you bring it in front of us, then it would probably go to the Building Department to make sure that it’s not going to structurally change the building, and it would probably be fine.

Mr. Berkheiser – Work with Emily on that.

### **Friends of Byers – Mike Elick**

- We had our Vintage Event, which went fairly well.
  - We had 21 vendors scheduled; 4 were missing for different reasons.
  - We had about 300 attendees.
  - We had the farmhouse open for tours and we gave about 12 tours.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – How’d they like that?

Mike Elick – From what I heard, everybody really enjoyed it and they were impressed.

- Karen and Dean are out of town. I was there on Sunday and a couple people asked if the farmhouse was open, but unfortunately I don’t have keys.
- The siding project on the east side front wall is almost complete. It’s been hectic with the weather. All we have left is the trim around the board and bottom. Other than that, signage is up and it’s stained.
- We’re getting ready for our next event, Boo-Bash on October 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Karen and Dean noticed that there was a leak in the roof, over by the ice box in the kitchen area. They called Sam. I don’t know what came about with that yet.

Mr. Berkheiser – The barn or the farmhouse?

Mike Elick – The farmhouse.

Mr. Berkheiser – The roof was replaced. Did they notify Emily?

Mike Elick – I believe so, but they also called Sam. Sam was going to get the roofer out to take a look at it. Sam is the contractor who did the renovations.

Mark Schoder – It should be warrantied still.

Director England – Dean was in contact with Mark.

Mr. Berkheiser – So the Vintage event was a fundraiser, by donation only. How much money did you guys raise for that? For the vendor booths, et cetera.

Mike Elick – As of our meeting last week, there wasn’t a tally yet.

Mr. Berkheiser – As a reminder, especially when we're coming up to Boo-Bash and everything else, it's still a public park so we don't charge people. If there is a donation bucket there, that's fine, but don't charge people.

Mike Elick – Yes, there is a donation bucket.

Mr. Berkheiser – We had some communication issues and I just wanted to remind your group that we don't charge for these functions. We got feedback that said it was not a free-will donation. Basically, they wanted people to pay. We don't do that with any of our parks.

Mike Elick – Okay. That's about it.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Anything from the other groups?

Director England – The Lakes report is in your packet.

**Lakes Athletics Association – Jerry Stoddard, President**

*A report dated August 23, 2023, was submitted in the packet:*

- *League Update – Fall 2023 season is underway throughout mid-October, games will be Sundays. We are also sharing F7 and other fields with our friends at Lakes Hawks Football as they are available, however, with so many 12U and 14U teams, this is limited. Thank you!*
- *Upcoming Dates & Information*
  - *Season Dates – Fall on Sundays starting after Labor Day*
  - *Monthly Meeting – Next scheduled meet Nov/Dec TBD for the Board meeting*
  - *2023 Capital Improvements – Sprinkler work is completed; LAA will work with Parks to schedule meetings for review and support of repair work invoices. Thank you!*
- *Needs from Township*
  - *Picnic Tables – Can the Township provide ~5 new picnic tables for the park? We have limited, and the current are old. We have increased volume at the concessions, and would like to provide families a place to enjoy.*
  - *Cement Bleacher Pads – The poured cement bleacher pads and ADA accessible seating area on Field #1; in process; thank you!*
  - *Sprinklers – Repaired and renovated after many years of service. Map of the completed system is now in existence for future construction reference. LAA can schedule meeting with P&R to review and discuss next steps, and reimbursement for approved portion share. Please advise meeting availability or process to complete reimbursement.*

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

- Interlakes Girls Softball
- Motor City Mountain Bike Association
- Lakes Area Hawks
- CW3 Soccer

Vice Chairperson Petsch – I know Hawks is busy with football; they've started.

Director England – Soccer has started as well.

## **ITEM 2: TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORT**

Mr. Berkheiser provided the following:

- A few things I think might be of interest.
- We renewed the cemetery contract. That is for routine cutting and maintenance. Obviously any trees that go down are on us. I know the tree on Commerce Road was finally taken, but we still have insurance issues there, in case you get asked those types of questions.
- We made some modifications to Five & Main. That is the project going on in the DDA area. We are hopeful that maybe late this fall or early spring, we will see dirt start to get moved. We should start seeing some infrastructure projects there in the near future.
- We had some discussion on the pathway down here, by the pickleball courts and down the side. There was approval to get costs and initial information, but it has not necessarily been approved to do the whole pathway piece. I think Emily might have an update to that. Part of the concern was that to do the pathway further down to Newton Road, it's sort of the pathway to nowhere because it's not connecting. There might be some other information, but we will do the engineering and groundwork in case we want to do that.

## **ITEM 3: PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT REPORT**

Director England discussed the following:

- The biggest thing on here is the senior transportation program. Starting on September 1<sup>st</sup>, that contract will be with the County now. The County is contracting with People's Express.
- There's 7 communities that currently use People's Express. It will open up our boundaries to include all 7 of those communities. Larry, do you know the boundaries off hand?

Supervisor Gray – That would be 7 Mile Road to M-59, and Drake Road to US-23.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Wow.

Director England –

- So, it's opening up the boundaries where our residents will be able to travel. Our residents will pay \$2 each way if they are a senior citizen, disabled or a veteran, and everybody else will pay \$4 each way per ride.
- Our concert series is done. We are already moving forward with scheduling next year's concerts.
- We did get the \$100,000 grant from Oakland County for the improvements to Bicentennial Park. I'm working on another grant application for that park as well.
- We're working on the construction documents for Bicentennial Park and for Victory Park.
- The Master Plan is underway.

Mr. Berkheiser – On People’s Express, I’ll add that the Supervisor worked really hard and was very supportive. The Township is spending \$2.3 million, but the Township budget will not pay for the service. We were spending about \$150,000 a year. The County is not as good at negotiating as we were, because I think they’re paying about twice as much as what we paid before, but now people have a much larger area they can get delivered to. Even if the price doubled, we are still out \$2 million.

Director England – By opening the boundaries, it is allowing people to reach the SMART connector buses so they can travel even further.

Mr. Berkheiser – The County still does not have a very firm plan on what they are doing with that \$60 million they’re getting per year. We have yet to see a plan. They have hired a consultant to come up with a plan. More to come on that program.

#### **ITEM 4: PARK LIAISON REPORTS**

##### **Waterworth – Hickory Glen Park**

- I went to the park today. I sent Emily several pictures of graffiti on the pathway, on benches and swings.
- Other than that, the rest of the park looks fine.
- I met with the Lakes Board, the baseball league. It was nice to meet them. They had questions about insurance coverages and responsibilities, especially as it relates to trees within the park along the frontage.

Director England – The Township is responsible for those.

##### **Krueger – Dodge Park**

- I drove through the park today, both the Library side and the other side.
- Everything is looking good. I didn’t see any trees down.
- By the playground, there were 30 cars in the parking lot, but not a single car in the handicap spaces.
- It was nice to see all the people and the kids playing on the equipment.

##### **Schwartz – Byers and Mill Race**

- Nothing to report for Byers.
- At Mill Race, for our next meeting, if anybody wants to walk back through there, it is very damp and muggy so please be prepared. I know it usually is, but it is exceptional.

Ms. Waterworth – I went to the Vintage event at Byers, and I got to see the farmhouse and all of the items in there. I remember Karen had mentioned something about materials **missing**. I was wondering, do we have a list of the inventory, or does the Township have property within the house?

Director England – We do; we have a current inventory of all items in the house. If things were added to the house since the keys were given back to the organization, we are not aware of it.

Ms. Waterworth – Okay.

Mr. Berkheiser – If it's in the house, it's our property. There's nothing that I'm aware of that's on loan to Commerce Township and stored in the house. There might be issues that need to be worked out. If somebody thinks they have personal property in the house, then we may need to work with the attorneys to come up with an agreement accordingly. Even if something goes to the Library for a display, there should be a paper trail of some kind.

Mark Schoder – Yes, they're supposed to ask permission before they put anything in the house.

Discussion continued regarding items in the farmhouse, and items in the barn that were moved out during the farmhouse renovations.

Mr. Krueger – I'm donating a tree or two. Does that have to be approved by the Board?

Mr. Berkheiser – You have to go through the appropriate paperwork to donate a tree. We set that up a couple years ago. Reach out to Emily and Allison. There are potential opportunities to donate trees or benches.

Mr. Krueger – Okay. It's just that I know she had planted a couple of trees.

#### **Berkheiser – Wise Woods & Victory Park**

- People are still using the parking lot and we're getting use of the area.
- We still have some folks parking on the south side on the hill. As we discussed earlier, we're working on plans to formalize that side of the park and anything we can do to increase public access to those areas will help.
- We still have some encroachment issues back there, but some of that is coming under control.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Is there anything going on with that encroachment, Mr. Supervisor? People are quite upset, aren't they?

Supervisor Gray – There's a few, yes. At the Board, we need to talk about what we're going to do moving forward. We've had complaints that people bought their house 20 years ago and the fence was there. People didn't get their land surveyed, but everybody who buys a house has the opportunity to survey their land so they know what they have, and don't have.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Absolutely.

Mr. Berkheiser – The Township has taken a fairly strict stance that if you are on Park property, it's Park property and so that means it is everybody's use. We are willing to work with people if they are using some of the Township's residential property. We have lots out there in residential areas, for those that are being encroached on, we're going back to look at those. We had a whole bunch of people on the list, but I think we're down to about five.

Supervisor Gray – We're down to two that are on residential.

Mr. Berkheiser – We're working with folks on residential, but we're taking a fairly hard stance regarding Parks property because that belongs to everybody in the Township.

**Petsch – Bicentennial Park**

- I'm looking forward to all of the improvements that are going to go into the park.
- The plans look great.
- I think it will be a big benefit to that area of the community, and I think the community is looking forward to it as well.

Supervisor Gray – You should be able to see your park from the road by September 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> when the building is taken down.

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

No report in Garbutt's absence.

**Walker – Maple Glen**

No report in Walker's absence.

**ITEM 5: VILLAGE OF WOLVERINE UPDATE**

Ms. Waterworth discussed the following with the Committee:

- The corn roast is September 9<sup>th</sup>, starting at 12:00pm.
- There will be a band, 2XL, and the corn hole competition starts at 1:00pm.

**ITEM 6: MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT**

Mark Schoder discussed the following with the Committee:

- We had a lot of trees down from the last couple of storms. We're busy cleaning that up.
- The old Township Hall is clean and ready to be torn down.
- We had graffiti at Bicentennial again.
- We had lawn jobs at the sledding hill. I'm wondering if we could do some kind of fencing there, maybe split-rail, to keep cars from going through there.

Discussion took place regarding options to deter issues at the sledding hill.

- At Long Park, we hope to start tearing up the concrete on Wednesday for the pavilion.
- We need to make repairs at Scarlet's; a couple picnic tables and replace some boards. We're waiting for some hardware to put some parts back up.

Director England – I will add that the manufacturer of that playground equipment met with us onsite last week; myself, Mark and the people from Scarlet's Smile. He's getting us anything that needs attention along with some extra hardware.

Mr. Berkheiser – I'll jump in on Snowy Ridge. I forgot that we had a Boy Scout do an Eagle Scout project there. There's a railing on the fence posts now to assist folks as they go up the hill in the wintertime. Mark prepped the area and got it ready, then the boys went out, bought the supplies and put it up. We're also going to put in some signage there so we have rules posted at the top of the hill.



**ITEM 7: PARK SIGNAGE**

Director England – We're still working on that. We will keep it on the agenda for next month.

**ITEM 8: PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

Leah Groya, Planner & Partner at LivingLab, was present to discuss the Parks & Recreation Master Plan update. Information was provided in the Committee's packet. Leah delivered a PowerPoint presentation and discussed highlights of the public input received from the survey results.

- Over 600 responses were received and there are about 30 hard copy surveys that will also be input.
- Quite a few people use the park system. The majority use them as often as they like; however, some residents don't know what's offered, what's going on or where things are.
- A number of comments were regarding not being able to walk or bike to the parks, which coincides with the sidewalk/trail discussions that the Township hears.
- Facilities in Commerce that are being used the most: Dodge, the Richardson Community Center and Park, Proud Lake State Park, Byers, the Airline Trail, Hickory Glen and Maple Glen. Those are the top parks from those surveyed.
- Top responses regarding amenities that are most important to folks, some of which the Township offers now, and some of which it does not: walking/biking trails, restrooms, open space, natural areas, playgrounds, splash pad, new kayak launches.
- Special events; people would be interested in the following: farmer's market, exercise/yoga classes, nature walks, art classes, walking/running clubs, pickleball classes.

Mr. Berkheiser – These are choices we gave them to choose from?

Leah Groya – Yes, you could select those. These are things that I think Emily and Allison have been hearing about, so they wanted to prioritize them. People could also fill in other things too if they had another idea they would be most interested in. You'll see those down in the comments.

- We've had a lot of requests for sidewalks and pathways along major roads to improve connectivity.
- When asked, *would you support additional millage in the future to construct more sidewalks and pathways?* Of this group, 70% said yes, about 13% said no, and the other 17% was undecided.
- This is trying to get at where people are finding their information right now about Parks & Recreation. Social media came out on top, friends and family, and then the Township website was third.
- Demographics: Emily and I were happy with this cross-section of people that took the survey. There was a lot of effort to get some of the older population engaged with the survey.
- 42% of respondents have kids in the house, while 57% do not.
- We gave an opportunity to leave an email address. These will be added to the department's email list for updates, communications and announcements.

Ms. Schwartz – During some of our events, there were tables set up and community members were given an opportunity to write down ideas. Is that data accounted for anywhere?

Leah Groya – We have paper copies and we're going to type out those responses, but it's not easily transferable into the actual survey.

Discussion continued regarding input received at events.

Leah Groya –

- There are open responses about any other comments people wanted to make. There were quite a few about wanting natural open space, not wanting trees cut down, not wanting more construction in the community, sidewalks/trails, et cetera.
- That's the presentation. I don't know if anyone wants to discuss anything.

Mr. Berkheiser – Can we have a quick summary from a project point-of-view that we can share with either Planning or the Board? A list of the Top 10 items from 600 out of 40,000 people.

Leah Groya – Yes, we can pull a couple responses that are of particular interest. I think some of them are what you would have expected. We can pull any of these tables or charts into a couple of slides.

Director England – I've been in contact with Dave Campbell and Paula in the Planning Department. We're going to start working together to make sure that the Township Master Plan as a whole coincides with our Parks Master Plan.

Mr. Berkheiser – It's great to get the feedback, and certainly it's a lot more than we've gotten, but it's still only 600 people who have a vested interest as opposed to 40,000 people or however many voters we have.

Leah Groya – The other item in your packet, you may remember at the end of July, we had some quick, informal conversations with a number of folks. We tried to summarize those results here. On the first page of that summary, we first went through and tried to understand what people think are *things that you're proud of in the community, things you don't want to change, what you think is great about the system, staffing, et cetera*. If it has a number in parentheses, that indicates the comment was made a number of times. Items listed were:

- Pickleball
- Concerts
- Scarlet's Smile
- Trails and paths
- The variety of programming
- Biking and walking trails at Hickory Glen
- The Senior Center
- Good variety
- Access improvements

- Grant dollars have increased
- Open space
- Sports fields

On the second page of that summary, we were asking, *what are some of the things you think are holding us back, or that you would like to see changed, or that you think we need that we don't have now, and what can we do better?*

- Some of the top comments were just general; lack of money and staff is limiting.
- Dog park
- Marketing, community input and getting the word out in general about what's happening
- Maintenance challenges due to lack of staffing
- Online registration and ability to make payments
- Parking at Richardson.
- There was a comment that we have these great things, great properties, great facilities, great staff and great programs, and with that, it brings a lot of other people from other communities and the challenges that might bring.
- The walking paths in the woods
- Accessibility
- Expanding services means expanding staff, so we have to be thinking about that as we are adding new things
- More volunteers
- More parking at other parks
- Increasing walkability
- Pavilions

These were comments from many staff and league folks, those stakeholder groups.

The third and fourth items are things that Emily and I started to brainstorm and draft based on all of what we just heard, along with things that Emily knows you have talked about in the past, or she hears from the community or staff. If you'll remember in your current 5-year plan, there's a number of pages with detailed goals and objectives. We think a lot of them will still hold true and will pull through to this next draft, but there's a lot there to get through and to be reminded of. We were talking about maybe having a one-page reminder, and it would be formatted differently, once you come to a consensus.

So, what are the big goals or big projects for you as a Committee and Township over the next 5 years that this plan is going to cover? When you think of looking back 5 years from now, what big things do you want to accomplish? This is in addition to everyday items and smaller projects. We drafted this list and this is for discussion today, and over the next couple of months to massage that. I'll go over these and then we'll open it up for discussion.

- Implement Improvements @ Wise Road Park – access drive, dog park, parking
- Focus on marketing, raising awareness, and online registrations/payments
- Add 2-4 new classes/programs and 1-2 additional Special Events
- Renew parks and recreation millage and support additional millage for trails and side paths

- Grow the Department with additional staff
- Resolve storage issue
- Elevate Forestry Management and Invasive Species control at all properties
- Develop agreement for restroom use during park hours at Hickory Glen and Maple Glen
- Support construction of additional trails and side paths that improve connectivity to parks
- Develop a DPW yard/storage/equipment area to improve operations

We thought those were some of the big things that you might want to think about how to implement over the next 5 years. There's also a Capital Improvements schedule draft in your packet. This is trying to focus on items for everyone in a quick and easy to read format.

Director England – Do you have any comments on these? This was the list Leah and I came up with based on survey results, things we've heard over the years, things that were in the last Master Plan and what we see as the future.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Emily, get that to us so we can have some time to review it. I think there's a lot of items there to look over and make some notes on, and we can bring it to the next meeting.

Ms. Waterworth – I do like the idea of the one-page to remind us as we're focusing each year on our budget.

Leah Groya – And I don't think it replaces your Capital Improvement table, or even the more detailed goals and objectives. I'll put the grant funder hat on; when you do submit grant applications, the State wants to make sure that whatever project you submit for meets a goal in your plan. So, we're pretty intentionally broad with your goal statements, and we get into more detail with your objectives.

Director England – Yes, this is a tool we can use during the budget season. I constantly use the Capital Improvement priority list. This would just help bring those goals into that same useful tool.

Mr. Krueger – Can we just bring up ideas during the course of the week?

Director England – Email me.

Mr. Krueger – Okay.

Leah Groya – The final two pages in your packet is what we were talking about; the Capital Improvement priority table. You'll remember that you have something very similar in your current plan. When this gets approved in the 5-year plan in December or January, it doesn't mean everything is funded, and it doesn't mean all these projects are greenlit by you or the Board. It just means these are things we're thinking about trying to figure out how to fund, based on things we're hearing from surveys, staff, Committee members, Board members. It's a way to organize those thoughts.

So far, Emily and I looked at your current Capital Improvement schedule and we crossed off things you've accomplished over the last 5 years, and those were deleted. We kept in things that we think you still want to focus on and think about over the next 5 years, and then we added some things. This is a first draft for you to think about.

Director England – You should be proud of yourselves. The amount of items we took off the last Capital Improvement list was significant. Kudos to the Parks Committee.

Leah Groya – Once this keeps moving forward in the draft phase, we will put in X's to indicate short-term projects, mid-term, long-term, or ongoing things such as picnic tables, benches and trees. This adds the Commerce Boat Launch. In the nonmotorized section, we're working with Dave Campbell to make sure it jives with what the Planning Department is working on.

Ms. Waterworth – So you want us to mark-up those two pages and let Emily know?

Director England – If there's something you'd like to add.

Ms. Waterworth – Okay.

Leah Groya – Unless Emily thinks there should be a bigger discussion, I think the sooner you can let Emily know, we will keep moving forward with drafting the document. The more input, and the quicker you submit that to Emily, I think it will be easier.

Ms. Schwartz – Is there an item on here that is the longest standing items that we haven't been able to get across the finish line? Like lighting at Snowy Ridge has been on the docket a while.

Director England – I would say Bicentennial Park would fall into that category, along with Mill Race, and Snowy Ridge.

Leah Groya – Victory Park has probably been on there longer than the last 5-year plan.

Director England – Yes, because we redid the plans. I think this coincides with the budget schedule that we just created.

#### **ITEM 9: OPEN SPACE MILLAGE**

Director England – Our millage is up for renewal. It needs to go on the ballot next year. We have some questions. The original rate was .3939 mills. The Headlee rollback this year is at .3662. In December of this year, we should bring in \$895,000 with the millage. The question is, what millage rate are we seeking with the renewal? If I remember correctly, we can go up .5 without it being a new millage. It would still be considered a renewal. And, we are allowed to place it twice in a calendar year on the elections. So, what rate are we seeking and what term? We want to keep it 10 years. Do we want to do the .5 mills and what election did you want it on the ballot? Would you want the August or November election?

Mr. Berkheiser – What was the original rate?

Director England – .3939.

Ms. Waterworth – If you raise it by the .5, how much does that bring it to?

Director England – We can't exceed the original amount.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – I think we've got to be careful. People aren't happy with what happened to their tax bill due to the transportation thing. It was a big shock. Most residents have \$200 tacked on their tax bill for something we don't even use. Everybody has been kind of happy so far and it has moved along pretty well. This is our third renewal, correct?

Director England – This will be our third renewal.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – It was a hard battle to get this in the first place. This is how we're improving everything. If it stays status quo, and it looks like we can work with that in our budget, I think that's a good place to be.

Director England – We originally only brought in about \$600,000.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Yes, the average property values have gone up and the number of residents in the Township has gone up, therefore, so has the amount of money in our coffers. I'm just reminding this board, you can make your choices as you wish, but sour grapes are tough to get over.

Director England – So if it stays right now at .3662, it's estimated at \$895,000.

Discussion took place regarding the original .3939 millage rate, which was set based upon what the Committee wanted to accomplish at that time and how much money was needed to do it. The Headlee rollback happens each year, and the rate was not increased for the last renewal. Budget figures were discussed in relation to the annual millage income. If the millage is not renewed in 2024, Parks would not receive funds from the 2024 winter tax bill. Discussion continued regarding millage capture over the 10-year term, and whether or not to keep the rate the same. Mr. Berkheiser clarified that the Township Board will make the final decisions.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – People see that we are doing things, such as the pickleball courts. It's unfortunate we had to put that fence up, but it's very obvious and people see it all the time. It's very busy. And we have the \$100,000 grant going into Bicentennial. If we get some things done at Wise and Victory, that's going to be huge. If they're happy with what we're doing, and they're not paying any more out of their pockets, they might just renew it. I'm hoping it goes that way.

Director England reviewed a list of accomplishments for the year, which is a helpful tool for the renewal.

Mr. Berkheiser – So you're going to recommend a 10-year term at the same amount, and which election?

Director England – The idea in the past has always been to put it on the August election. This is a presidential election, so by putting it on in August, it gives you the opportunity to go back in November if for some reason it failed. There are some Board members who feel that it just needs to go straight to the November election. There has been discussion about the timing to get it on the tax bill. So have discussion amongst yourselves and make a recommendation of what election you feel it needs to go on.

**MOTION** by Krueger, supported by Petsch, for the Open Space Millage Renewal, to maintain the same rate as before, with a 10-year term, at the August 2024 election.

Discussion –

Berkheiser – My personal opinion is that we should get as many people as possible to vote, and I don't feel that is at an August election. So, I would prefer November.

Waterworth – What happens if it doesn't pass? We get no millage?

Petsch – Then we're back to square one.

Berkheiser – You start over the next year, but you have lost a year of funding.

Schwartz – Has there ever been an August election that it didn't pass?

Petsch – No. When we put it on the ballot and promoted it for what we were going to do, it passed. We did not have to submit it twice. Then it was overwhelmingly supported for the renewal. I don't see where there is going to be a problem because we've accomplished so much.

Schwartz – To be clear, the downside is that if it fails in November, then it's done.

However, that has not happened before. The upside is that we would get to hear from more people that actually want to spend that money. We are already starting it lower. I do think I would want to hear from more people.

Krueger – I prefer August simply because it is going to be a simpler election. I fear the November election is going to have so much crazy press, I'm not sure if I want to make the millage part of that. I think it will hold on its own better in August.

Waterworth – The advantage with August is that if it passes, there's plenty of time to get it on the tax roll. That is a true issue we're worried out.

England – That is a true issue that Molly is concerned about.

Berkheiser – Can you find out what the past rates were, and also the percentage of our voters that voted in August versus November?

England – For those that had the millage on it?

Berkheiser – Right. I would like to know that for the Board decision.

Petsch – I'm going to call for the vote on Ron's motion, that we keep the millage rate the same, for a 10-year term, and we have it on the August ballot.

**MOTION CARRIED 4-1 (Berkheiser Nay)**

**ITEM 10: PARK EVENT UPDATES**

Director England discussed the following with the Committee:

- We are teaming up with the Library this year to do a Trail & Treat on Friday, October 27<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm. We will send out information to you about that so you can spread the word to get vendors to hand out candy.
- We have our second annual Christmas Tree Lighting here at the Richardson Center on Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- We are having a fun, recreational Pickleball Tournament, Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>.

Discussion took place regarding the Christmas Tree Lighting and the success of last year's event.

**ITEM 11: OTHER MATTERS**

Mr. Berkheiser – I know you get questions. The Wixom Road property, aka the Horse Farm; the Township work group interviewed interested parties. That is moving along and we expect to have more information at the next Township Board meeting.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Are we continuing in the direction of continuing as a horse farm?

Mr. Berkheiser – The Board made a commitment to the community to have equestrian activities in there, but we wanted more community agricultural opportunities besides just horse lessons. That's the goal we are working toward. I think the work group has a recommendation and we would then move forward into the concessionaire agreement negotiations. I think it will be good.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – I was looking out back toward the lake behind Richardson Center. Can we brush that down to see the water?

Mark Schoder – There's a lot of trees.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Can we look at it? It would really be a great view.

Discussion continued regarding the concept plan for Richardson, which includes adding a pathway down to the lake, clearing and putting in a dock.

**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.**

**ITEM 12: ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** by Krueger, supported by Waterworth, to adjourn the meeting at 8:21pm.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

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Barbara Garbutt, Secretary