

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

*Monday, September 23, 2024*

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  
Krystal Schwartz, Secretary  
Bob Berkheiser  
Ron Krueger  
Laura Waterworth

**Also Present:** Denise Vecellio  
Emily England, Director of Senior Services/Parks & Recreation  
Mark Schoder, Maintenance Director

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**MOTION** by Petsch, seconded by Krueger, to approve the August 26, 2024, Parks and Recreation Committee Regular Meeting Minutes as written.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Chairperson Walker opened to Public Comments.**

There were no comments.

**Chairperson Walker closed to Public Comments.**

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

**Interlakes Girls Softball – Tim Bailey**

Mr. Bailey shared the following with the Committee.

- We elected our officers and positions were filled last June. Our new member is Jeremiah Fick. He is going to be your liaison. He has been with the organization about 11 years. He's a dedicated member and he handles all of the tournaments for us. He's a good guy and he knows what's going on with our league.
- We have our meetings going again this month. We got back in gear after having the summer off. Things are looking good.
- We're going to be getting involved with the Halloween Trail-or-Treat event this year. We got a lot of positive feedback from that last year.
- Sprinklers are being winterized in October, on the 28<sup>th</sup> I believe.
- We have tournaments coming up this weekend and the following weekend; 64 teams, 16 on Saturday and Sunday each weekend. That's our fall tournament.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Are those all round-robins?

Jeremiah Fick – It's 4 games per team, per day. It's a little bit different format than spring.

### **Lakes Area Hawks – Andy Graham**

Mr. Graham shared the following with the Committee.

- We're still rolling along with our season.
- We have our family day this Saturday.
- We only have one more game after that, the playoff round, and then we will shut down the field after that.

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

Mr. Schantz shared the following with the Committee.

- We're doing our usual fall prep and gearing up for the Boo Bash on October 19<sup>th</sup>.
- We're really busy on Sundays and we have lots of photographers on the grounds.
- We're going to try to schedule our Fall Cleanup with Scouts Troop 308. I think Dave is the new liaison.

### **Motor City Mountain Bike Association – Mike Kearney**

Mr. Kearney shared the following with the Committee.

- Not a whole lot to report.
- There have been a few trees down after the last big round of storms, but nothing significant. We took care of them within a few days.
- We will be in dire need of some trimming in the spring.

### **Silo Ranch – Director England**

Director England shared the following with the Committee.

- Dawn could not make it tonight, but I have an update.
- They had their Silo Fest this past weekend. It was a great event overall, just a little smaller than what they were hoping for. They plan to continue that next year.
- They finished the roof panels, but there are still some leaking spots. Mark and I will go take a look at that. He still needs to address some ceiling issues.
- They have a new trainer who has settled in. He has tons of new clients starting this week that came to the event.
- Their trail rides are up and going. Dawn will get me that information next week so that we can start advertising.

### **CW3 Soccer – Chris Haney**

Discussion took place regarding issues at Dodge Park with kids riding motorized dirt bikes on the pathways and in the park, and doing damage to the soccer fields. Information is being provided to the OCSO.

**Lakes Athletics Association – Jared Stoddard**

A report was submitted in the packet dated September 17, 2024:

- *League Update – LAA Fall ball is now under way. One thing to watch will be the park saturation on concurrent weekends with Hawks Football, and accommodating any open field needs request for the football program, without sacrificing Fall baseball allocations.*
- *Upcoming Dates & Information*
  - *Season Dates: Lakes Fall Ball: Friday evenings and Sundays Sept thru Oct*
  - *2024 Capital Improvements – Ideas for improvements under discussion.*
    - *Overhaul bathroom amenities and plumbing*
    - *Net for F7 foul ball into neighbor property*
    - *Hot water tank replacement*
    - *Infields groundwork*
- *Needs From Township*
  - *Cement Bleacher Pads F1: the poured cement bleacher pads and ADA accessible seating area on Field #1; Township to provide updates*
  - *Tree Trim: Brush clean-up for outfield fence of Field #1 (impede into fence and play area) (see attachment)*
  - *Lawn Service Vendor – improvement, especially weed whip: Areas of HG park have opportunities for weed whip improvement by township vendor. Photos and description of needs are in a separate attachment.*
- *Agreed Upon Work - Thank you for moving Porta John from Field 7 to Field 1*

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

- *Commerce Little League*

**ITEM 2: TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORT**

Mr. Berkheiser provided the following:

- We are deep in budget discussions. We have had several meetings.
- For informational purposes, we've split the budget up and found that this has worked well over the years. We do it in sections. We plan to wrap up and approve the final budget by the end of October. Then people can move forward on the things that were approved for 2025.
- At the last regular meeting, we reprogrammed the CDBG money. We are using that money in several different places.
- The Victory Park improvement contracts were approved so that project should be starting shortly. We held off on the contract for fencing at the dog park. That was pulled out to be done separately because we have someone who is interested in either fully or partially funding the fencing. We will look at that next month.
- DTE is going to do some lighting. Surprisingly, they are paying for the parking lot lighting at Victory Park. We did an agreement with them.
- The Union Lake Kayak Launch was approved. I just want to make sure we start on that. There are contractual meetings Emily has to have to get that rolling.
- You may still hear people complain about Priority Waste. Their Vice President in charge of government accounts was here to apologize. We did approve to change service. The old contract was 4 days a week, Tuesday through Fridays. To do the Tuesday service, they needed 19 trucks in Commerce Township. So, they've moved it to a 5-day week, Monday through Friday. That evens it out with roughly 9-10 trucks daily. So, a section of the Township will move to from Tuesday to Monday pickups.

Ms. Waterworth – Bob, when you said Victory Park was approved, is that to do the bathrooms and drill the well?

Mr. Berkheiser – No, it's the stuff we saw that we recommended to the Board for approval. Bids came in.

Director England – We're going to refer to it as Phase I, which includes the entrance into the park, the parking lot and the dog park itself. You will have the pathways, the sidewalks that lead up to the dog park, the fencing; however, no water stations and nothing to do with water at this point, and also the lighting that Bob spoke about that DTE is going to do. What we found at Bicentennial is that if we do the Safe Streets program with DTE, it was almost a \$20,000 savings. They install the lights for us and then we're on a maintenance program where they maintain the lights for us.

Mr. Berkheiser – The issue, as you'll remember, was with the well. We are talking with the County about the issues. Therefore, we pulled the well out. You can drill a well anytime you want. Once we know what we need to do for water, then the bathroom and drinking fountain will flow after that.

Director England – The well was going to be separate to begin with.

Ms. Waterworth – I actually don't care if there is a bathroom there. I've never been to a dog park with a bathroom. We just want a dog park area with a fence. We don't need pavement or a parking lot.

Mr. Berkheiser – We have someone who wants to pay toward the fence and that will go in after we have the other stuff done. That has all been approved.

Ms. Waterworth – Thank you.

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

Director England discussed the following:

- The majority is on the agenda and in the written report in the packet.
- To piggyback on what Bob said, Victory Park and the Kayak Launch contracts were both awarded to the same company. They should be starting within the next week or so. And I will be meeting with the anonymous fence donor for the dog park and that will go back to the Township Board at their October meeting, to either move forward with the donor, or award the contract to one of the bidders. Victory Park is not done yet, but the bid came in under the estimate.
- At Bicentennial, we're waiting for the handrail to be put up on the little culvert bridge, and signage to be put back up. Other than that, the park is complete and it looks absolutely wonderful. That community has really embraced it and we're happy to see people using it. That was a really good project.
- We're getting ready for the Trail-or-Treat on October 25<sup>th</sup>, and our Christmas Tree Lighting on December 7<sup>th</sup>.
- We have our Pickleball Tournament on Oct. 5<sup>th</sup>. We have only 3 spots left.

- Lakes sent over a tree maintenance report with their Board report that was included in your packet. I do want to touch base on that. Mark went over and took a look at the items they had listed. Again, they listed the trees behind Field 1 which have been addressed. Things Mark felt were a safety concern will be addressed. Things that are not a safety concern will not be. That is not what we do, and I will send a follow-up email to them about that.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – They also had it in their report about “netting down, Field 7” to catch balls from going into the neighbor’s yard.

Mr. Berkheiser – Some of it had to do with taking trees down to make it easier to cut the grass.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Yes, I read all of that.

Director England – I see it; we’re not putting a net up. I will also address that.

Ms. Waterworth – Are they allowed to put the net up?

Director England – They are allowed to, with permission of this Committee.

Ms. Waterworth – Okay, so they have to come here and ask for permission.

Director England – Yes. I’ll explain, for those of you who don’t know how this works. That net is not needed for the general public to utilize that park. It is needed for the league to do what they do in that park, and that’s where we draw the line. Something for their use is their responsibility.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Do we use the same lawn people here that are over at Dodge?

Mr. Schoder – Yes.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Obviously, they’re not doing their job from what it looks like in the pictures sent. Is that being addressed?

Mr. Schoder – We go over it, and Emily addresses it with the lawn cutting company.

Director England – We’ve had a few parks where that has been the case. Anytime that it is addressed, it’s taken care of immediately and we don’t see the problem continuing. Some of those pictures are old and those issues have been addressed. I do ask any of you, if you see an issue, please tell us so we can address it. They will take care of it.

#### **ITEM 4: MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT**

Mr. Schoder discussed the following with the Committee:

- We got a call from the electrician for Byers Farm. We worked with him and got the guys over there. We moved a bunch of furniture out of the way so he’s working now. Hopefully he will be done soon.
- The new bollards came in. We’re starting to install them. We had to cut out the old ones. They don’t line up so we have to redrill. They’re for the Airline Trail.

- We're doing more wood chipping and putting chips on the trails. We took some trees down across the street from the boat launch.
- Field 1 at Hickory Glen; the field is clean, but their flags need to be replaced. They're torn up and it doesn't look good.

Mr. Krueger – Do they have lights on the flags?

Mr. Schoder – It was daylight out.

Chairperson Walker – Should we require that when they put the flagpoles up?

Mr. Krueger – Can I offer to help?

Mr. Schoder – I'll swing by there on the way back to the shop to see if they have lights.

- The baseball field, Field 1, we have it marked out to be cut out whenever they're ready to start and Emily gets it approved.
- We had erosion on the Airline Trail; there's two areas over by Haggerty and the M-5 bridge. They're pretty bad and they will have to do something with that. The rain just washes the pathway away.
- More split rail posts were taken.

#### **ITEM 5: PARK LIAISON REPORTS**

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

- You've heard my update on Victory Park. That's all moving forward.
- Not much going on at Wise Woods.

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

- We were all there today.
- The biggest thing for me is the bridge.

##### **Vecellio – Long Park & Snowy Ridge Park**

- Snowy Ridge looks fine.
- In Long Park, it looks like they've stopped doing graffiti, but now there's a lock on there. I'm not sure what that was.

Mr. Schoder – Yes, that's scheduled for tomorrow. It was weird.

Ms. Vecellio – Otherwise, everything looks good. We will talk about signs later.

##### **Walker – Maple Glen**

- I went by Maple Glen Saturday while I was checking out the Silo Fest. The park was pretty busy and there was a lot going on. There were a lot of people there.
- Everything looked good and people looked like they were having fun. They were parking anywhere they could find a spot.

##### **Petsch – Bicentennial Park**

- A lot of people are using the park.
- It's really cool. I've got people telling me they're happy to see pickleball courts in there. The neighborhood is very happy.

- I checked on the other ball field there. The ball field sand is approximately \$45 per ton. When Bruce Gilmer gets some time in the fall, I could possibly get him over there. He does a lot of athletic fields.

### **Krueger – Dodge Park**

- I have to apologize; I did not go by the park this past month. I've been doing a lot of traveling. I didn't know they were having problems with dirt bikes.
- You will see me there more often.

Mr. Berkheiser – If you see something, call the police.

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

- I also have not been by my park.
- I've spent more time driving by Long Park for two weeks and I can't believe how many people are there between 7-8am. That park gets used.
- For Hickory Glen, I don't know anything else beyond what's been reported.

### **ITEM 6: VILLAGE OF WOLVERINE UPDATE**

Ms. Waterworth discussed the following with the Committee:

- I was in a 2-week workshop, so I also did not go to the Village meeting last week.

Mr. Krueger – I went to the corn roast and I learned that all of those basketball and tennis courts they have at Clara Miller Park; they're planning to convert those to pickleball courts. They'll maintain some basketball courts. They have a lot of asphalt.

Ms. Waterworth – Speaking of Clara Miller Park, since we have people who like to ride dirt bikes, they will be making a BMX bike trail as part of Clara Miller.

### **ITEM 7: BYER'S HISTORICAL MARKER**

Director England discussed the following with the Committee:

- They don't have a new narrative yet. They have some work ahead of them.
- We had a meeting with Michelle from the State. We found out that Byers Farm is actually still listed on the historic registry. She recommended that we don't try to attach the new marker to that. They also do not understand why it's there.
- We are going to go after a new marker when this is done.
- They are not as strict as they used to be. She said they found that they were removing a lot of markers from homes because of things that needed to be improved and what was included in that marker.
- To sum it up, you need to tell the story. You need to decide on the story you want to tell about the historical significance to the Township. If it's not included in the story, then you don't have to worry about maintaining it a certain way.
- Regarding the house itself, or any of the buildings, unfortunately it doesn't sound like there is enough information to be able to include it. They want to know the builder and architect information which we can't find. I actually don't know how they expect us to find that. At the end of the day, buildings are not going to be included on the marker. They can be briefly referenced; you can say there is a house from the 1800's and as long as it looks like a house from that period, they don't care what you do inside.

- I think the focus will turn to the property itself. Ron brought up a question and I inquired about making the bridge ADA accessible and putting in a pathway. Again, it went right back to, as long as that pathway is not specific to the story, then they're not going to focus on that. We just need to make sure that the story is focused on the property and that was a settlement piece.
- In the narrative provided to you last month, it stated that the property was originally 80 acres and then the property was sold. We can't put that in there because we have no record of the property being sold or how it was split.
- They're very eager to help. She offered to meet with us again once the narrative is written to give feedback.
- The long-term is not what it used to be. We just have to maintain the sign.

Vice Chairperson Petsch discussed the trail of history for the property going back to the 1800's.

Ms. Schantz – We have the original deed, signed by a U.S. President. We have no deed to the farmhouse.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – But we can get a historical marker for the property.

Discussion continued regarding the historical documents on file and the process to acquire a new marker. Director England added that June Byers can be referenced in the story; it just can't be about her homestead. Friends of Byers will continue working on the narrative, and they will bring it back to the Committee for approval.

### **ITEM 8: MEMORIAL TREE**

Director England discussed the following with the Committee:

- She did not get back with me today. They are looking at different sites.
- We broke the news to them that they cannot spread her ashes on the ground where the tree is planted. She is fine with that.

### **ITEM 9: HOLIDAY LIGHTS**

Mr. Berkheiser – We talked about having permanent lighting. I personally don't want that. I think we need to move forward with the temporary lighting for this season. Then, I think we need to get bids to review for permanent lighting. My concern with that is it becomes a maintenance issue for our Maintenance Department. I don't think we need to be dumping more stuff on them. You've seen the bids. It's the same company that did it last year. I think the pricing is close to the same.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – I agree with you, Bob. We should go ahead with temporary, and then review options for permanent. With today's technology, we can see how long this type of lighting would last without maintenance, and Ron could tell us.

Mr. Berkheiser discussed the concept of assigning tasks to specific people which could further progress on budgeted items.

**MOTION** by Berkheiser, supported by Petsch, to accept the two bids from PinkPro for temporary holiday lighting to be installed at Byers Farm and the Richardson Center.

Discussion –

Petsch – Is everyone happy with what they did last year?

Dean Schantz – We got compliments.

England – They will do the house and they want to install October 1<sup>st</sup>. I asked them to keep it up until the first week of March.

Walker – The quote says January 3<sup>rd</sup> to February 5<sup>th</sup>.

England – I have an email confirming they will go with those dates.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Krueger – Will they service it?

Chairperson Walker – Yes, it's in the quote. They have 24 hours to fix anything before December 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Director England – I was very happy with them last year.

**ITEM 10: 2025 MEETING DATES**

Mr. Berkheiser – The only comment I have is that we need to add the Kayak Launch Park to the list. I was going to suggest the October meeting which is Wise Road.

**MOTION** by Petsch, seconded by Schwartz, to approve the Parks & Recreation Committee 2025 Meeting Dates as written, with the addition of the Union Lake Canoe & Kayak Launch to the October meeting.

Discussion –

Berkheiser – Do we have the Silo Ranch on here?

Schwartz – No.

Berkheiser – Is that something we should do?

England – It's not typically a park. I think if someone wants to visit, you reach out to me and I can set that up.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**ITEM 11: LONG PARK DESCRIPTIVE SIGN**

Director England discussed the following with the Committee:

- I have a picture. Denise went over there. She's great about visiting that park.
- The signs at the front of the park, if you remember, were an Eagle Scout project done in 2012 by Ryan Bach.
- They are leather and they need to be replaced.
- I was going to contact the company that Byers used for that sign. When was that installed?

Mr. Schantz – It was probably about 6 years ago.

Director England – Yes, and it still looks amazing, so I think we should reach out to them. An idea Denise had was to do a photo contest. There are so many photographers over there, so we will do a contest to select that photo.

Discussion continued regarding the photo contest, the three signs needed at Long Park, and the cost, quality and warranty of the Byers' sign. Director England would get prices on the signs and bring them back to the Committee.

Director England – I'm asking if you support the photo contest. You don't have to do anything other than vote on the pictures.

The Committee was in favor of the contest.

**ITEM 12: PARK IMPROVEMENT UPDATES**

Director England – These were covered.

**ITEM 13: PARK EVENT UPDATES**

Director England – These were covered.

**ITEM 14: OTHER MATTERS**

Ms. Waterworth – If you want to see Bob get sworn in, November 20<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Berkheiser – There is a swearing in ceremony here at 6:00pm. So, I know we talked about it, but I want it documented. From the Mill Race Park walk around, I think we need to look into the pond situation; whether it needs to be cleaned out, treated, aerated, those types of things, and whose responsibility it is. It's not really our retention pond. I think it falls onto Jonna.

That sign and entry way needs to be refurbished, cleaned, painted, et cetera. The stuff up there is starting to rot away. I don't know if that is something you want to look at in conjunction with the bridge.

Director England – Yes, okay.

Mr. Berkheiser – I don't know what the rules are, but if we wait 5 more years, we won't have a creek across the street by Byers. So, all that grass and everything that's in there, something needs to be done with all of that.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – With the entrance on the backside of Mill Race; now, we do have a sign on the front side where you enter the park. We could put in something like that and get rid of the post.

Mr. Berkheiser – There's a sign on it. Certainly, in the meantime, if we're putting in a brand new fence, we might want to put something else in. I think that needs to be looked at.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – I'm saying get rid of that whole thing and put up a sign like we have out front.

Mr. Berkheiser – I don't disagree, but I think there needs to be something in the back parking lot so people know it's an entrance to the park.

Director England – Maybe we put a main park entry sign. The email I sent to Jay about that, back on August 1<sup>st</sup>, said that it is not our responsibility to maintain that. So, we just need to reach back out to the developer and find out why it's not being aerated any more.

Discussion continued regarding cleaning up the retention pond and looking into the deed restrictions.

**The next Parks and Recreation Meeting is scheduled for October 28, 2024, at 7:00PM at the Township Hall, after the 6:00pm park visits at Wise Woods & Victory Park.**

**ITEM 15: ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** by Petsch, seconded by Kreuger, to adjourn the meeting at 7:52pm.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

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Krystal Schwartz, Secretary