

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

*Monday, August 26, 2024*

2009 Township Drive  
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

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

**ROLL CALL:** **Present:** Johnny Walker, Chairperson  
William Petsch, Vice Chairperson  
Bob Berkheiser  
Ron Krueger  
Laura Waterworth  
Denise Vecellio  
**Absent:** Krystal Schwartz, Secretary (excused)  
**Also Present:** Emily England, Director of Senior Services/Parks & Recreation  
George Weber, Township Trustee

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**MOTION** by Petsch, seconded by Krueger, to approve the July 22, 2024, Parks and Recreation Committee Regular Meeting Minutes.

**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**

**Silo Ranch – Dawn Ray**

Ms. Ray shared the following with the Committee.

- We had millings delivered. We are waiting for those to be done.
- The roof is getting repaired now. They have 90% of it painted. They have not done the skylights yet. They were there today.
- The observation room has been completely finished.
- The fence is 99% done.
- I have flyers for Silo Fest which is coming up in 3 weeks. We have about 15 vendors. We have all of our music, except we are looking for one more entertainer. The beer tent is set to go. And, a portion of the proceeds are going to the Special Olympics.

Mr. Berkheiser – Did you get permits for the beer tent?

Ms. Ray – The vendor did from Multi Lakes.

Director England – Multi Lakes is handling it for them.

Mr. Berkheiser – Okay.

Ms. Ray – So we're just working on getting everything cleaned up and that's about it.

Chairperson Walker – I saw a picture of the observation room. That looks awesome.

Mr. Berkheiser – Are you moving toward trail rides?

Ms. Ray – Yes. I'm actually in talks with a woman this week to bring in some horses. It's just finding the right horses for it. We will talk this week and hopefully in the fall, we will have some trail rides.

Mr. Berkheiser – Okay. So, Emily, I see on here it say's "Parking \$5.00". Generally, in parks we don't charge, but it's not a park.

Director England – They are a concessionaire.

Mr. Berkheiser – So, we're good.

Director England – They're not the same. They are paying to use the property. They're not treated like a nonprofit.

### **CW3 Soccer – Chris Haney**

Mr. Haney shared the following with the Committee.

- We had opening weekend, the first games, this last Saturday.
- We had high level girls' competition.
- The rec games start on the 7<sup>th</sup>.
- I've been out there and it actually looked pretty good.

Mr. Berkheiser – Did you have something Sunday? I saw a ton of cars out there.

Mr. Haney – Yes, I think the first game started at 9:00am.

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

Mr. Graham shared the following with the Committee.

- Our season kicked off last Saturday.
- It was a clean sweep for us so that was good.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – What league are you guys?

Mr. Graham – We are the MYFCC, which includes Grosse Pointe, East Side Eagles, Rochester Raiders, Plymouth Canton Steelers, Canton Lions, Pontiac Panthers, Macomb Mustangs.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Congratulations on the sweep.

**Friends of Byers – Dean & Karen Schantz, Mike Elick**

Mr. Elick shared the following with the Committee.

- We just got done with our Vintage event, which did very well. We had about 20 vendors and about 450 people came by, and 80 people went through the house on tours.
- If you haven't driven by and noticed, the north side is now all done, sided and trimmed. The sign is up, everything. Next year will be the west side.
- Sales in the barn have been good.
- We are starting to get ready for Boo Bash.

Director England – What is the date of that?

Mr. Elick – Don't quote me but I think they said October 25<sup>th</sup>. They were debating either October 19<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Berkheiser – Emily, did the electrical get done at Byers?

Director England – It is supposed to start tomorrow.

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

- *Lakes Athletics Association*
- *Motor City Mountain Bike Association*
- *Interlakes Girls Softball*
- *Commerce Little League*

**ITEM 2: TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORT**

Mr. Berkheiser provided the following:

- We had a really short meeting. It might have been a record, but they keep saying when I'm there, it's not a record.
- We had the Library present their strategic plan. I bring that up because I think as we move through that, there will potentially be more combination type events for the community between Parks and the Library.
- Obviously from the election, the millage passed. So, there will be money for the Parks starting next year.
- Some aquatic weed SAD's were approved.
- Multi Lakes; I don't know how much that applies to what they're doing if they did a special permit, but Multi Lakes got approved to continue on with their process to get a Class C Liquor License, which will increase activities that they can do at their facility, and it may allow for some potential partnering.

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

Director England discussed the following:

- The majority is in your packet.
- At Bicentennial, the courts are complete. We have not made an official announcement yet as we are waiting on signage, but people are using the pickleball courts. Park rules signs need to be replaced, and they're redoing the railing on the old bridge.
- Victory Park bids are due tomorrow at 4:00pm.

- Kayak Launch bids are due Wednesday at 4:00pm.
- I don't know if you are familiar with the project for the Library pathway, but it's going to extend down S. Commerce Road. We're doing that corner and the boardwalk, and it will extend over in front of Byers. It's basically to make a safe crossing at the Commerce & S. Commerce intersection. We're sending the package to EGLE and finalizing the design that will connect to the bridge in Byers. It will actually make that bridge ADA accessible as well. The hope is that we can get that bid out, start the project, and have it complete by June 2025.
- We have an estimate for the Richardson parking, and he included the pathway out front, along with the restroom. We will go over that under the budget.

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

Director England – Mark is not here. They have been out continuing their work. They're gearing up for fall closing activities and budget season, what they need for next year. I do know that he is planning to be onsite tomorrow when they pour concrete.

Mr. Berkheiser – A comment on maintenance; I asked if we have a routine maintenance calendar of when things need to be done. I think Mark and Emily are working on something like that. This building has been here for more than 5 years. I want to make sure we have ...

Director England – Preventative maintenance.

Mr. Berkheiser – Yes. Obviously, responding to things, but if we get to a point where we can do preventative maintenance, we need to make sure we do that. That should be on all Township properties, but certainly this building.

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

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

- We're waiting on the Victory Park information.
- The only comment I have is that I was driving by last night and it was dusk. There were still cars in the lots at the kayak launch, but also on the Wise Woods side.
- Our parks close at dusk. We should get with the Sheriff's office to make sure that when they're going around, they check on folks who are parked. I know we've had cars in the kayak lot late at night.

##### **Petsch – Bicentennial Park**

- As soon as we fixed things up, the park started getting used again.
- We have basketball and pickleball. They have another place to play.
- I do get a lot of comments from friends that they're pleased with what we've got here and they look forward to the future.
- A lot of questions come up about Victory; what we're going to do there and when we will have recreation in that area. We're moving along and it's a good thing.

##### **Walker – Maple Glen**

- The park was really busy this past weekend.
- I went through about two weeks ago.
- Even when there aren't games, there's still people wandering around the parks, so that's good.

**Waterworth – Hickory Glen Park**

- I have not been there, but I definitely heard a major tournament this weekend.
- The park is being used and someone was playing really well. I could hear the band playing the national anthem, and I could hear cheering.
- When we drive by, it always looks good.
- I'll have more details when the bugs go away.

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

- Snowy Ridge looks fine.
- Long Park; the trails have been cleared really nicely, so thank Mark for that.
- Do you know if they plan to add more stone on the paths?

Director England – I will double check. I don't know if that was planned for this year, or if they were waiting for spring. If it needs it, I can let him know.

Ms. Vecellio – Yes, throughout the park there's about 10 places. And thank you for fixing the stand that was before the covered bridge. Now, the one after the bridge has the same wobble on the right hand side. But, there's no graffiti.

**Krueger – Dodge Park**

- I drove through a couple times.
- For the first time today when I drove through, there wasn't a single car or person in the park. The temperature was 92 degrees.
- Everything is looking good from a distance. I did not walk the park.
- I will walk the park, or ride, before our next meeting.
- I went by the Library too and everything is looking good, and there's no weeds in the flower beds there.

Director England – That's Mark and his guys.

Mr. Krueger – They look great. They did a fantastic job.

**Schwartz – Byers and Mill Race**

- No report in Schwartz's absence.

**ITEM 6: VILLAGE OF WOLVERINE UPDATE**

Ms. Waterworth discussed the following with the Committee:

- The Corn Roast is at Clara Miller Park on September 7<sup>th</sup> at 12:00pm.
- There will be a party and 2XL is the band.
- The cornhole tournament is at 1:00pm.
- There is a children's pie eating contest at 3:30pm.

**ITEM 7: MEMORIAL TREE DONATION**

Director England discussed the following with the Committee:

- I'm still waiting to hear back from the Township Attorney.
- Legally, they cannot do it with ashes, so we need to get something from the Attorney and I will reach back out to them.

- If they still want to proceed, we will tell them to pick a different park because we will be dealing with forestry issues over there.
- I will bring this back to you next month.

**ITEM 8: BYERS' HISTORICAL MARKER**

Ellen Smith and Cheryl Quinn of the Historical Committee were present to discuss the Historical Marker proposal for Byers.

Director England – I'll give a brief overview. Ellen and Cheryl have been long-time board members of the Friends of Byers. They were here when the original marker was removed from the site, which was directly connected to June's house. When the house came down, the marker was removed.

I know Ellen has been working for years, getting the resources together to bring a marker back. They feel confident enough that they are here now. In your packet is a summary of what they have for the narrative which will be sent to the State of Michigan. Keep in mind, we don't write what is on the sign, and they don't write it. The State of Michigan Historian will write what goes on the sign based on the information.

Ms. Smith – But they do have you put some proposed text.

Director England – Yes. I also provided the Secretary of the Interior standards, which you have to follow when you're doing any maintenance or updates. Are you doing the sign based on the property, or are you including the buildings?

Ms. Smith – Oh, we're including the buildings for sure.

Director England – So if we do any future work, it has to follow these standards.

Mr. Krueger – What about the electrical work we're having done now?

Director England – It would occur before, so I believe it's fine. I included all of that in the packet for you to review, and then you have the actual application in here. I'll have Ellen and Cheryl give you an overview of what they found, and then allow the Committee to ask questions. What they're looking for from you is a recommendation that you want to proceed with a historical marker for the Byers site. Once you make that motion, then it would go to the Township Board for final approval.

Ms. Waterworth – What does this mean monetarily for the Township?

Ms. Smith – We had a donation of \$5,000 for the marker, and then Friends of Byers will pick up the difference if it's more than \$5,000.

Director England – But, we have to do this because we are the owners of the property, which means we are agreeing to everything that comes along with it.

Ms. Smith – On this application, I wasn't sure if they were going to allow us to include June Byers' information. So, what we're going to do is include her information and then for the proposed marker title, just put Abram Walrod Settlement. And, then the text can include June.

Director England – I saw that as well. I remember Ashley stated at one point that it couldn't have anything to do with June Byers, but I think that was the connection to the house. I think in the text is okay.

Ms. Smith – I think it's okay too, and if they have a two-sided marker we can put Walrod on one side and June Byers on the other, but the title will say Abram Walrod Settlement, because June Byers didn't settle and that was the problem. It said Byers' Homestead before and that was wrong.

Ms. Quinn – Thinking about what Laura just said, just so you understand, what we submit is just for historic designation. Applying for the marker is separate deal. If they say it's \$30,000 and it's way out of control, then we wouldn't do it. This is just for the designation.

Ms. Smith – Well, we're requesting a marker also.

Ms. Quinn – Fine, but you can still have one without the other.

Ms. Smith – But we want the marker.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Any way you do it, and I know how long you've been at this, once we get the designation, if at this time you can't afford the physical marker, we can do that anytime.

Ms. Smith – Our position too is that we'd like to get it ordered for the Bicentennial.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – I agree. What I'm saying is that once you get this approved, that we can get a historical marker back, we then have time to get the plaque made up.

Ms. Quinn – I think it's in bronze so a lot is driven by that cost.

Ms. Smith – It may have gone up considerably.

Chairperson Walker – Does this also protect the property too, or is it already protected historically?

Director England – No.

Ms. Smith – My understanding is that it does not.

Ms. Quinn – Consider this; there was a marker there and it got removed. So it did not protect it that time either.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – It got removed because it was inaccurate. But if this is a national historic marker, that usually protects the piece of property from being developed for other reasons.

Ms. Quinn – Usually is a good word.

Director England – There's always a way around that so I don't think you ever have full protection.

Discussion continued regarding protection, or a lack of, for historical sites.

Chairperson Walker – Do we have to refer this to the Board?

Director England – Yes, the Attorneys have to review it and the Township Board makes the ultimate decision.

Trustee Weber – The best protection we have is that it is a park, so it can be developed for housing or commercial uses.

Director England – People ask why we can't take down the berms at Mill Race, but that would take away the historical significance and we would lose the sign.

Ms. Smith – That is the worst that can happen, that you lose the sign again. If the Friends of Byers are paying for it anyway, you're not losing anything in the future.

Ms. Quinn – I think the sign recognizes its importance for public perception.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Yes, I think it does. For all of the events at the historical site, all of the activities, it's nice.

Mr. Berkheiser – What does it do when it comes to doing repairs or upgrades on these buildings? That is my concern, that if the buildings fall under the historical designation, then we can't just go do the electrical upgrade because it has to be done in a certain fashion and it costs a lot more money.

Chairperson Walker – There are limitations.

Ms. Smith – I don't think we should let that stop us, do you?

Mr. Berkheiser – I think it's something that the Township Board has to consider; if we were to agree to apply, that then it potentially dramatically increases the costs of whatever we do at that site.

Ms. Quinn – It might potentially, but it also might just be a ... if you were going to do something anyway, they approve that.

Chairperson Walker – Well, they can approve, or deny, or change your plans.

Director England – I have a question. Why are you including the buildings, if it's actually the property that is historic?

Ms. Quinn – They demand it really.

Director England – But my thing is, if you don't include the buildings, then you don't have to follow this for the buildings.

Ms. Quinn – Well, our papers include buildings.

Chairperson Walker – The only reason you wouldn't include the buildings is that it's a giant headache to deal with the historical society. They want you to do things that are era correct.

Ms. Quinn – But see, you're assuming that. I didn't read it ...

Chairperson Walker – I've dealt with historical societies before and they're very specific on how you have to do things. They will tell you, if that was not done in that era, you can't do it. Or, they will want you to use certain materials to repair certain things. You have to bring any type of plans to them before you do anything.

Ms. Smith – That's what I would think, more than anything.

Chairperson Walker – They make things a lot more difficult. So, if you can get the land to be a marker, and mark just the land ...

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Just the site.

Ms. Quinn – They required the buildings.

Director England – It states, "buildings or property".

Mr. Berkheiser – Emily, is there someone at the State that can come to a meeting to present this and answer questions?

Ms. Smith – I was hoping to meet with Michelle Davis.

Director England – They would never come before, but that was years ago. We can inquire.

Ms. Smith – You can have a zoom meeting with Michelle Davis. We were talking about doing it Wednesday morning.

Chairperson Walker – You might be able to find another historic society who would be willing to send a representative who could tell you how it's going to go. Northville has a huge historic society that does everything with their downtown housing, because of all the houses in Northville that have historic designations.

Mr. Berkheiser – Milford has it too.

Ms. Quinn – Wixom has a number historic homes as well.

Chairperson Walker – Yes, so find out from one of those people in the historic society what it's going to take.

Director England – Ultimately, I think that decision is ours to make. That's why it's being presented and that's why I asked the question, what supporting documents do you have

to support that the buildings are of historic significance versus the property? I don't know what you have for primary documentation.

Ms. Smith – As far as the buildings, I have plenty of documentation about Walrod's settlement. It's all in here.

Ms. Quinn – She included pictures.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Right, but as stated on here, it says, *Currently, the names of the builders of the structures are unknown. We are continuing to research the builder of the iconic Farmhouse.* So, we don't know.

Ms. Smith – I tried.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – That's a variable, that we do not know when it was built or by whom.

Ms. Quinn – There's a huge portion of missing records.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – That's what we're saying; possibly by eliminating that, since we don't have all of the historic documents on the house itself, or the barn, that we get the marker for the site. And then we continue to keep it as original as we can. All of this is being done so it's safe, so people can go in. For 15 years, we couldn't let anybody in the house, but we finally got it stabilized.

Discussion continued regarding further research to be done for the Byers historic designation. Vice Chairperson Petsch encouraged that answers be sought regarding a designation for only the property, and excluding the buildings. He added that we know the facts about Abram Walrod settling the site and that would allow the Township to proceed to get the property designated, and get a marker. There are concerns with the historical standards as it relates to maintaining the buildings, the related costs, and also with having the proper documentation for the buildings. Ms. Vecellio felt that when the general public sees that it's a historical settlement, they will assume it's everything. Director England asked, besides the age of the buildings, what makes them historic to Commerce Township? What is the historical significance? There is no question that the property itself is historically significant to the Township. The previous marker and its removal was discussed. Ms. Waterworth noted that it sounds like the Committee is in favor of a historical designation for the land only, with a historic settlement name, and if that can be done, it could be recommended to the Township Board. Ms. Quinn and Ms. Smith will get answers and this item will carry over to the next Parks agenda. Mr. Krueger discussed the river running through the site, the bridge and how that might tie in, along with issues where the river is washing out the riverbanks.

### **ITEM 9: MILL RACE BRIDGE**

Director England discussed the following with the Committee:

- I just need some direction regarding the bridge, which is located on the back side of the Mill Race property.

- We talked briefly about this and whether we wanted to keep it as a walking bridge, or if we wanted to widen it to allow for vehicles to get across it. Do you want it to look like the bridge that is already there?

Vice Chairperson Petsch – I think we should make it wide enough to get vehicles across it, and it doesn't have to look like the bridge in front. As long as it is structurally sound, it would enable maintenance to be done at the back of the property. It would allow for a pickup truck or an ambulance as necessary.

Chairperson Walker – Would we put posts in there, removable bollards?

Mr. Berkheiser – I personally think the bridge should look like the one that is in the front, but get with Mark Rousseaux to get pricing.

Director England – It would look the same as the one at Byers.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Fine, yes. Not a covered bridge.

#### **ITEM 10: BUDGET OVERVIEW**

Director England discussed the following with the Committee:

- I'm going to address the Open Space millage and what we still have going from what we budgeted for this year. That will end up being awarded this year and hopefully started this year, but possibly finished early next year, plus what we budgeted to do in 2025. We are at \$3,000,477. That's fine and we can cover that with what we're projected to bring in.
- I wanted to update you that for the Richardson parking lot, we had the Township Engineer look at adding 54 spots. That's estimated at \$372,000.
- He is looking at a pre-fab restroom facility, so we await a price on that. We can adjust that number as we see fit.

Mr. Berkheiser – So that pre-fab, looking out here, would that allow storage on the other side of it?

Director England – We have had conversations administratively about putting a garage/pole barn type building on this site to store supplies for Parks events. We fill up a lot of buildings in the Township. As we looked at the pre-fab buildings, we saw that you can get those that have a storage room as well. We thought about making that a larger building and have it be the restrooms and storage building. We're getting prices on the options.

Chairperson Walker – Would the 54 spots be paved asphalt?

Director England – Yes, asphalt.

Chairperson Walker – Okay, so it's about \$7,000 per space.

Director England – So I just wanted to clarify that. It will be presented to the Board the way that it is.

Mr. Berkheiser – She has to present the budget first and it has to be approved.

Discussion took place regarding the cost of portable restroom units and how those would still be necessary for concert events.

Director England – For the General Fund, I'll go through what we're including as projects that fall under Building & Grounds Maintenance.

- We're budgeting for woodchips for the play structures.
- We're going to finish the Maple Glen bathrooms. We did not budget this year to do the roof. It's in decent condition, but he wants to put a shingle protectant over the top on the girls' bathroom, along with new gutters and some wood replacement. That's \$4,000.
- On the south property line at Maple Glen, there's a fence. It's old and needs some TLC. \$3,000
- The split-rail fences for Byers and Snowy Ridge, \$10,000, although Snowy Ridge may come out of there.
- We included crushed limestone for the pathways at Long Park.
- Wood repair for bridges and observation decks; that's for bridges at Hickory Glen and along S. Commerce Road, \$10,000.
- Security lighting at Bicentennial, motion sensor
- Work here at Richardson on the deck, stain it to match the other deck, and look at installing an ADA cement pad.
- Miscellaneous tree work.

Mr. Berkheiser – For the pathways and bridges, is that coming out of our maintenance or trail maintenance?

Director England – I currently have it coming out of our Building & Grounds Maintenance.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Why would that be when that pathway is not ours.

Director England – It is ours.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – It's the Township's but it's not Parks'.

Director England – The pathway goes through the park. We have a trailway fund.

Mr. Berkheiser – You can budget out of there and the Board can decide.

Ms. Waterworth – When Mark does it, is he replacing it as needed?

Director England – Yes. Okay, so Capital Outlays:

- Picnic tables, \$25,000
- Signs
- Benches, Victory Park is calling for 11 so I need to get a current cost estimate

- Security Cameras, we're looking at different types because we're having issues with cameras that are data based and charging with the solar panels. We will continue to try those. We think they will work in some areas but not all. Some will have to be hard wired in where we are having issues. \$20,000
- AED's in the parks, \$6,500. That goes back to the conversation about the ball leagues having access, having one here and at Scarlet's. I talked to Stacy Gross from the Fire Department. She has a guy she's been working with. We also talked about the possibility of having the Fire Department alerted somehow when the cabinet is opened.

Mr. Berkheiser initiated discussion about AED's and training for leagues. Mr. Haney noted that the directions are on the unit.

Director England – I have also included on here, Online Registration, \$16,000 as a carryover. This is going to address issues in the Senior Center, as well as issues with park programming. Currently, we use Google Docs. We sign people up for a pickleball tournament, but they have no way to pay. If we have it so they can access payment online, then we aren't chasing people down.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Did you include the handling fee and service fee?

Director England – Correct. It would also help with rentals for the Senior Center. Anything we take payment for, we always charge a service fee for credit cards. We use G2G through the County right now and that's extremely expensive. I have met with several companies. The issue is getting the third-party to work with our system. I will work with our Treasurer on that.  
I also included the storage garage on here which we just talked about.

#### **ITEM 11: PARK EVENT UPDATES**

Director England – This is just a standing item. We're gearing up for the Trail-or-Treat and working with the Library on that. Next will be holiday lighting. In addition, we are looking at June 14<sup>th</sup> to do the Bicentennial Celebration.

#### **ITEM 12: OTHER MATTERS**

Mr. Berkheiser – A comment on the kayak launch. If you drive through there, you'll see that there is a kayak rack in there that one of the Eagle Scouts did as his project.

**The next Parks and Recreation Meeting is scheduled for September 23, 2024, at 7:00PM at the Township Hall, after the 6:00pm park visits at Mill Race & Byers.**

#### **ITEM 13: ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION** by Petsch, supported by Waterworth, to adjourn the meeting at 7:59pm.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

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Krystal Schwartz, Secretary