

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

Monday, April 22, 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
Bob Berkheiser
Ron Krueger
Laura Waterworth
Denise Vecellio
Absent: Krystal Schwartz, Secretary (excused)
Also Present: Emily England, Director of Senior Services/Parks & Recreation
Allison Kennedy, Asst. to Parks & Recreation Director
Mark Schoder, Maintenance Director

COMMUNICATIONS:

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MOTION by Petsch, seconded by Krueger, to approve the March 25, 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

Friends of Byers – Dean & Karen Schantz

Mr. Schantz shared the following with the Committee.

- We've been really busy on Sundays in the barn.
- We are doing mini tours on the weekends also. We're averaging 4-5 groups each Sunday. There's a lot of interest in the farmhouse.
- I've contacted three contractors. They've all done their estimate for the 100-amp service. I've got two estimates back and I'm waiting for the third. The third contractor wanted to touch base with Jay James to make sure everything is on the same plane. There are some elements of residential codes that might not apply to a house that's on display.

- We're gearing up for the May 5th cleanup. We'll plant flowers. We have Boy Scouts Troop 308 and the Girl Scouts. My daughter's nonprofit will clean around the river bank.
- We have 10 vendors for our August 11th Ugly Duckling Antique event.

Silo Ranch – Dawn Ray

Ms. Ray shared the following with the Committee.

- We had our Open House two weekends ago. We had about 300 people which was a decent turnout.
- Next Sunday, May 5th is our first "Horses & Horsepower".
- We've got more of the fence up.

Director England – When is your event for the community garden?

Ms. Ray – That is ...

Ms. Kennedy – May 18th.

Ms. Ray – Thank you, yes, May 18th at 1:00pm. That is the informational and they will be able to start getting to their plots that day.

Mr. Berkheiser – What is May 5th?

Ms. Ray – Horses & Horsepower; that's the car event.

Mr. Berkheiser – Okay, Sunday, May 5th.

Ms. Ray – Correct, it's always the first Sunday of the month every month, except for September due to Labor Day.

Director England – How did 4H go? Did you get any interest in it?

Ms. Ray – Yes, I think we had about 10 people signed up. Debbie was going to contact them to put together another meeting. I'm not sure of the date yet.

Director England – Okay, I'm just glad there was interest.

Ms. Kennedy – Do you still have community garden plots available if I post it again?

Ms. Ray – Yes.

Mr. Krueger – The food was really good.

Ms. Ray – It was.

Mr. Krueger – The cheesecake tacos, you wouldn't believe.

Ms. Waterworth – The event on May 5th is actually the "Coffee & Cars" event you've been talking about?

Ms. Ray – Yes.

Ms. Waterworth – Okay, I thought it was related to horses.

Ms. Ray – It's not, we just call it "Horses & Horsepower" for cars.

Mr. Krueger – It's a play on words.

Ms. Waterworth – Got it. What time?

Ms. Ray – 8:00am to 11:00am. After the May 5th event, each month we will have a theme.

Ms. Kennedy – We have a flyer of the post that went on the Facebook page. I can send out a copy of it.

Lakes Area Hawks – Andy Graham

Mr. Graham shared the following with the Committee.

- We have the water turned on at the field so the restrooms are available.
- We have an irrigation repair to make on baseball Field #7, and we will have to fix a dip in the field there. That should happen in the next couple of weeks.

Commerce Little League – Nikki Schaffer

An emailed report was submitted in the packet dated April 15, 2024:

- *CLL closed our spring registration with approximately 500 players and 41 teams ranging from age 4 year olds to 15 year olds.*
- *The Henderson Field project has concluded and the fencing looks fantastic. (Field when you pull into Maple Glen and across from the softball fields). By this field there are 3 pine trees that look like they are dead. Can they be removed? If all 3 cannot, can the tree below be assessed? If this tree falls, it will ruin the dugouts and the new fence we just put in.*

Lakes Athletics Association – Jared Stoddard

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

- *League Update – We are excited for the House Spring 2024 season opener Saturday, April 20th. Field clean-up completed on Saturday, April 6th and on field organized practices and travel LCB games have begun daily. LAA/LCB is once again preparing for our Memorial Weekend Tournament with full field entry.*
- *Upcoming Dates & Information*
 - *Season Dates –*
 - 1) *Opening Day Games for Spring '24 Season: Saturday April 20th*
 - 2) *LCB Memorial Weekend Tournament: May 24-26*
 - *2023 Capital Improvements –*
 - 1) *Sprinkler work is completed; LAA will work with Parks to schedule meetings for review and support of repair work invoices. We need to schedule a separate meeting for this discussion. TBD*
 - 2) *Infield landscape overhaul for 4 of the 7 fields at HG.*

- *Needs From Township*
 - *Picnic Tables: Can the township provide 5 new picnic tables for the park? We have limited, and the current are old and could pose a danger item if used. We have increased volume at the concessions, and would like to provide families a place to enjoy that's safe.*
 - *Cement Bleacher Pads F1: The poured cement bleacher pads and ADA accessible seating area on Field #1; Township to provide updates.*
 - *Tree Trim:*
 - 1) *Two large maple trees in front of garage are in need of clean-up to prevent major damage to building.*
 - 2) *Brush clean-up for outfield fence of Field #1 (impede into fence and play area)*
 - *Valve Control Box: Valve control box in the parking lot between fields 2 & 3 with a broken cover. If this is the case, it will require replacement.*
 - *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. Lakes board member will reach out to schedule meeting for further discussion in early 2024.*

No report submitted or representative present at the meeting for the following leagues:

- *CW3 Soccer*
- *Interlakes Girls Softball*

(Note: Mike Kearney of Motor City Mountain Bike Association arrived later during the meeting at 7:36pm.)

Director England – Before we move on, I would like to address the Lakes Athletics report. They referenced the sprinkler system again. I have reached out to them to verify what sprinkler system they're talking about. It's the system that we already had discussion with them about back in 2022, and it is not caused by damage from the Township. It was due to an old system, so that should be cleared up.

Mr. Berkheiser – Also, the other item on there had to do with a broken box, which is believed to be an irrigation box which would also be their issue.

Director England – Correct.

Mr. Schoder – Is that the one in the parking lot?

Director England – Yes.

Mr. Schoder – There's nothing in there. We pulled everything out of it and filled it in.

Director England – It's broken open again.

Mr. Schoder – There's no top on it. We took the top off and filled it with millings. It might be another one.

Director England – Yes, you'll need to check then and make sure.

ITEM 2: TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORT

Mr. Berkheiser provided the following:

- At the last Board meeting earlier this month, Ron Krueger was reappointed to the Parks & Recreation Committee for 4 years.
- We awarded the contracts for the S. Commerce and Bicentennial projects.

Vice Chairperson Petsch inquired about why the pathway along Oakley Park is being redone. Director England noted that the pathway is over 25 years old. Mr. Berkheiser added that there were other issues with the pathway too; the area in front of the insurance company had drainage issues. It will be fixed correctly. Director England also mentioned that the pathway is being added on the west side of the pickleball court so the gate can be utilized.

Mr. Berkheiser – The one on S. Commerce will hopefully fix S. Commerce, Commerce and Carroll Lake, the corner by the Library.

Director England – The Committee approved to do the design for that so we can get that bid out. That is a grant project.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – Do you have a boardwalk in that?

Director England – Yes.

ITEM 3: PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT REPORT

Director England discussed the following:

- The majority of everything is in the written report in the packet.
- At Bicentennial, they have started the pathway along Oakley Park, and along the pickleball court should be done by end of next week.
- They're finalizing the design work for the ADA accessible kayak launch, and the pathway on Oakley Park, as well as Victory Park. They're finalizing the design plan so we can get that out to bid this year.

ITEM 4: PARK LIAISON REPORTS

Berkheiser – Wise Woods & Victory Park

- In driving by Victory Park several times, there have been not as many cars on the north side in the actual parking lot. I mean still 3-4 cars, but it's filled on the south side. I'm hopeful we can get that moving and get a real parking lot in there to at least make it safe.
- If we can open it up and get usage we will decrease issues over there.

Schwartz – Byers and Mill Race

- No report.

Vecellio – Long Park & Snowy Ridge Park

- Nothing to report on Snowy Ridge.

- Long Park looks good, with the exception of a couple more graffiti drawings on two of the stanchions. I reported on one before, and now we have more. It looks like the same “artist”, and it looks like chalk but it isn’t.

Mr. Schoder – Yes, that takes a little bit of work to get it cleaned up. We did one spot and we found a cleaner that removed it.

Walker – Maple Glen

- I was there a couple weeks ago.
- The road was pretty rough, but I heard you have a new grader and you’re over there tilling it.

Mr. Schoder – We’re going to grade it every couple weeks now to keep it smooth.

Petsch – Bicentennial Park

- We were over there today and it looks like we need to contact the contractor who removed the old Town Hall. We found glass on the grounds and the grading was not done where the building was. It should have been seeded. There’s no grass. Emily, I think you or the Supervisor are going to check the contract to find out the status. We saw a lot of debris along the edges.
- I didn’t expect them to have to tear up the old basketball court, but I guess we will get all new there. That’s well underway.
- And, we did see the lacrosse people out there. That’s a good thing that the field is getting used.

Krueger – Dodge Park

- I drove by a few times and saw a lot of cars in the parking lot.
- I don’t know when soccer starts, or if those cars are there for the playground.

Mr. Schoder – Soccer has started.

Mr. Krueger – I’ll definitely be making more trips in there. I did have a question regarding Mill Race. The pond at the back, at the strip mall, is that ours?

Director England – It’s not ours.

Mr. Berkheiser – Are there issues with it?

Mr. Krueger – It has so much trash in it.

Mr. Berkheiser – We have addressed it with Jonna and asked them to clean that out and get the pump working, otherwise it will cause issues.

Director England – I’ll let Jay know.

Mr. Schoder – Yes, they’ve cleaned up when we’ve asked them to do it before. The Ordinance Officer will go over there.

Waterworth – Hickory Glen Park

- We were at Hickory Glen today.
- I wanted to note that along the whole pathway, every sign and bench has some sort of graffiti on it. I sent 14 pictures over.

ITEM 5: VILLAGE OF WOLVERINE UPDATE

Ms. Waterworth discussed the following with the Committee:

- I did not go to this month's meeting.
- If you are really into running or walking a 5K, after you walk our M-5K, on May 25th at 10:15am is their 5K run/walk.
- The Village of Wolverine Lake Spring Yard Sale is May 15th to May 18th.

ITEM 6: MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Mr. Schoder discussed the following with the Committee:

- Maple Glen and Scarlet restrooms are open and being used a lot.
- We will start grading every 2-3 weeks at Hickory Glen and Maple Glen.
- Emily and I talked about issues at the sledding hill with lawn jobs. We were going to put up split rail fence, but we agreed on boulders instead. That will be less damage and less work.
- At the boat launch, they moved the boulders so they could get their boats in. We pulled them back. We will have to think of something else.
- We will repair the Byers fence this week.
- We will repair the Airline Trail fence so it's good to go for the 5K.

Mr. Berkheiser – As far as the pocket park issue, even if we do kayaks, there will still be issues over there. It's only going to get worse in the summer when that official launch fills up; people will start looking for other places to launch. Does Union Lake get a water sheriff?

Director England – I think they do.

Mr. Berkheiser – If they do, we should make that part of it, too.

ITEM 7: E-BIKES

Director England – I talked to our Sheriff and currently, she has had zero complaints about people riding e-bikes. She has not heard of anything on her end. We all know that people ride e-bikes as we've seen them. I contacted Oakland County, Kristen Wiltfang, who works with Oakland County Parks and the railway system. Denise, I'm sure you know Kristen. We had a long conversation about it. She is taking the stand of; *They're here, and they're not going to go away.* All of the communities in Oakland County have been contacting them because we're all dealing with the same thing.

She did tell me that e-bikes are not considered motorized, and that was put into law by the State. As long as they have a seat, pedals and no more than a 750-watt motor, and that has to be on a sticker. The problem is, you can go into any bike store and get that sticker, no matter what bike you have.

The problem they are also running into is that it used to be very specific; it was Class 1, Class 2 and Class 3. Now, they're selling things to modify normal bikes. They're small and you would never know they're e-bikes, but some make them go up to 48mph.

Her recommendation to us would be not so much on, *Yes, they can be here*, or, *No, they can't be here*; but instead to teach proper trail etiquette. And more so, limit them on what trails they can be on. The width of the trail is a factor; their rule is 10-12 feet wide because then two bikes can pass safely next to each other and avoid collisions.

Typically, pathways like the Michigan Airline Trail are designed for 18mph. It has been shown that if you're traveling more than 18mph, it causes wear and tear to the pathway, which will then require more maintenance.

She said that we can make it, as the State does, so that it's on a paved pathway. Not on a natural or limestone pathway – only on paved pathways. So, we can do those things to limit it.

The State did just do a public survey. It said they released those findings on April 11th; however, we can't find them anywhere. They are going to discuss them at their next meeting, and they're looking at possibly changing what they have set in place.

I had a conversation with our attorney today. He said the way our Ordinance reads right now, it doesn't allow e-bikes. It's a nonmotorized pathway. Our Ordinance doesn't allow motorized vehicles on park property. I asked about the State law stating that these are not considered motorized vehicles, and he said because our Ordinance gets into the nitty gritty, that they would be covered. What we have now is ADA accessible. However, what we are proposing in our policy about motorized vehicles or motorized wheelchairs, if somebody has a disability, we would allow them and that covers us in that area. His recommendation is that we are covered right now, so maybe we wait and see what the State puts out.

The Country right now only allows Class 1, and that seems to be the trend across the board. We could see that changing in the future. The attorney brought up that you can set rules and regulations, and change ordinances, and create policies, but as it is right now, if somebody is involved in an accident and there's an injury, they can be charged with a misdemeanor based on the way that our Ordinance reads. That's going to be the same if you say Class 1, Class 2, if it's more than that, or they can't prove that, they can still be charged.

Mr. Berkheiser – Suppose it's a normal bicycle. They're not allowed on the pathway either.

Director England – It's not motorized, so there's nothing that I've found, but it's specifically motorized.

Mr. Berkheiser – I think you would have trouble with the idea of trying to prosecute, because I don't have to have mine turned on, yet there's still a motor and I'm pedaling.

Director England – Absolutely, and he said that. That's diving into the weeds. It would have to be extremely bad if you even got to that level, which is why, maybe we wait and see what the other communities around us do and be consistent with the communities that our pathways connect to. Kristen is not wrong in saying that these are not going away. We have it covered right now. So, instead of creating policy when we don't even know if it's the policy that we want, let's see what the State puts out. They're making changes to it because e-bikes are evolving.

I don't truly know how I feel about it. I can see both sides of it. I don't know what's right or wrong. I know that we have multiuse pathways. Maybe it isn't about the restriction of the e-bikes, but it's about where they're allowed.

Mr. Krueger – What about the speed limit?

Director England – Well, I asked the attorney that and he feels that if you put a speed limit sign up, then you're saying it's okay. You're encouraging it and that goes against what our Ordinance says right now. So you would need to address the Ordinance if we're going to put a speed limit sign up, which we are going to be addressing our Ordinance so that is something to think about.

Ms. Vecellio – Are our pathways even that wide; are they 10-12' wide?

Director England – No. The largest pathway we have is 8'.

Mr. Berkheiser – Personally, I'm in favor of a speed limit. The bikes that are on there already are doing what they're doing. He's not here, but I would reach out to Mike Kearney. Granted, they're probably not riding on the paved trails, but what speeds do the street bikes travel on paved trails? I would say if you're mixing pedestrians with bikes, and the bikes are going 15 mph, that's too fast.

Ms. Vecellio – Kensington is 10 mph.

Mr. Berkheiser – Right, and I think it should be 10 mph. If you're having mixed trails, which is what the Airline Trail is. I would also ask you to ask Larry about the Airline Trail Committee plan. He sits on that board.

Director England – Denise sits on that as well. I asked John how they came up with that and it was new when they came up with it. They just followed what the County was doing at that time. He came back to me and asked why and what are we thinking of doing. They're in the same boat, all of us are in the same boat.

Mr. Berkheiser – Well, he has to follow us, if the Township makes a decision.

Director England – You would like it to be consistent across communities. According to what Kristen was telling me, there are a lot of studies coming out. There is a professor at the University of Michigan, Flint, that did a big study with an e-bike group, and spent a whole year riding with them and learning. I feel this is great discussion and we need to continue it. I can't tell you how I feel about it right now. I would like to see what the State findings are and what the State is going to do. I'd like to talk to the local communities; Kristen gave me contact information.

Vice Chairperson Petsch – I think I agree with you Emily. I think we better wait until we get all of the information we need before we make a policy that we'd have to change again.

Ms. Vecellio – I agree. We don't have any big issues right now coming up. Nobody is complaining to us.

Discussion continued regarding trail etiquette, the Ordinance, enforcement, potential speed limits, consistency between communities, and results of the public survey. Director England will keep this item on the agenda for future discussions.

ITEM 8: PARK RULES

Director England – Allison has gone through and made the changes. We also added where the items are cited from. The attorneys reviewed this and they did not see any issues. We can move forward with it right now and leave out the e-bike section.

Mr. Berkheiser – So you're going to leave out Items 19 and 20, speed limit and e-bikes?

Director England – For now. What I would say too is, since a decision has not been made, I would just set policy with this and I wouldn't look at changing the Ordinance. That way we only have to change the Ordinance once. We don't want to take this back to the Township Board numerous times when we're near our decision, but we can set policy. If you're ready to approve what's here, then 19 and 20 will be excluded from this document until a decision is made. Then we will address the Ordinance and it will get added back into this policy.

MOTION by Waterworth, seconded by Petsch, to submit the Parks Rules policy, minus Items 19 and 20, e-bikes and speed limit. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

ITEM 9: PARKS PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Director England presented a video for the Committee; however, she encountered audio and technical issues. She would share the link with the Committee members via email. She is considering working with the creator of these videos, whom she and Supervisor Gray have met with, to promote Commerce Township Parks and what they have to offer.

Discussion took place regarding costs, sponsorships, and advertising associated with the videographer's site on YouTube.

ITEM 10: PARK EVENT UPDATES

Ms. Kennedy discussed the following with the Committee:

- The 5K is coming up on May 18th. There are right around 60 people registered for the event. This Friday is the last day to guarantee your shirt size.
- The concerts are all set.
 - We have all of the bands.
 - I will email a copy of the flyer to everybody.
 - The food trucks are all set.
 - We will have bouncers at three of the concerts.
 - We will have face painters at all of the concerts.
- Our first Pickleball Tournament is June 1st, and I think we already have 20 people registered. We are halfway through registration for that. Pickleball classes start May 13th.

Director England – Allison and I did learn last week how to access our website and update it. She created a Pickleball page on our website with all of the class information

ITEM 11: OTHER MATTERS

- Mr. Berkheiser discussed cleaning out brush at Dodge Park with Mr. Schoder.
- Discussion took place regarding solar cameras and solar lighting for the parks in relation to graffiti and other issues.
- Mike Kearney and Mr. Berkheiser discussed speeds that bikes travel, which is typically from 15-25 mph if there is no signage. They discussed the 10 mph speed limit at Kensington, mixed trails and safety for pedestrians.

The next Parks and Recreation Meeting is scheduled for May 20, 2024, at 7:00PM at the Township Hall, after the park visit at Maple Glen. (Note: *The May meeting was moved up one week due to the Memorial Day holiday.*)

ITEM 12: ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Berkheiser, supported by Krueger, to adjourn the meeting at 7:48pm.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Krystal Schwartz, Secretary