

**AGENDA**  
**Cascade Charter Township Parks Committee**  
**Special Meeting**  
**Tuesday, September 20, 2022**  
**7:00 am**  
**5920 Tahoe Dr**

- ARTICLE 1. Call the meeting to order  
Record the attendance**
- ARTICLE 2. Approve the current Agenda**
- ARTICLE 3. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak to non-agenda items.  
(Comments are limited to five minutes per speaker.)**
- ARTICLE 4. Review Draft Goals and Action Items for Parks Master Plan Update  
Requested Action: Review and discuss the draft goals, objections, and action items section of the Parks Master Plan.**
- ARTICLE 4. Review Concepts for the Wycliffe Property  
Requested Action: Review and discuss the draft concepts for the Wycliffe Property.**
- ARTICLE 5. Adjournment**

**Meeting format**

1. **Staff Presentation** *Staff report and recommendation*
2. **Project presentation-** *Applicant presentation and explanation of project*
  - a. **PUBLIC HEARINGS**
    - i. *Open Public Hearing. Comments are limited to five minutes per speaker; exception may be granted by the chair for representative speakers and applicants*
    - ii. *Close public hearing*
3. **Committee discussion -** *May ask for clarification from applicant, staff or public*
4. **Committee decision - Options**
  - a. *Table the decision*
  - b. *Deny*
  - c. *Approve*
  - d. *Approve with conditions*
  - e. *Recommendation to Township Board*

## Cascade Parks Goals, Objectives, and Action Items Draft

### Goal 1:

Ensure that existing parks meet the needs of the community that they serve. *Backed by comments from the strategic plan parks and recreation focus group, parks board meeting notes, and previous unfulfilled goals, and the parks and recreation 2021 survey results.*

1. Ensure sufficient resources in the annual budget for routine and long-term parks maintenance costs
  - Conduct a biannual meeting between Township personnel, parks committee, and maintenance director to identify critical maintenance needs, and develop a cost estimate to recommend be devoted to parks maintenance from the appropriate funding sources.
2. Allocate sufficient funding sources to assist with costs of parks and pathway maintenance and land acquisition purchases
  - Use funding determinations to create a parks millage proposal that will allocate funds to maintaining and improving existing parks.
3. Create long-term maintenance plan for parks, pathways, and parks trails extensions.
  - Parks committee to meet with parks maintenance director on a bi-annual basis to identify short- and long-term maintenance needs and create an ongoing checklist to tackle improvements.
4. Add amenities, infrastructure, and support facilities to best serve the community.
  - Parks committee to have work sessions biannually to determine improvement priorities. Refer to the public engagement survey and focus group feedback from the 2023-2027 Parks Masterplan and Strategic Plan to identify desired amenity and infrastructure improvements and implement as applicable with future projects.
    - Trailhead, bathrooms, nature-based play, pickleball, ice skating rink, splash pads were the highest ranked amenities and facilities
  - Coordinate with surrounding communities including Ada, Lowell, Kentwood and Caledonia as needed to determine connections, shared resources, needed amenities, and programming.
5. Recommend capital improvement projects to the Township Board based on the masterplan.
  - Parks committee to utilize the public input from the 2023-2027 Parks Masterplan to identify parks-related capital improvement projects most desired by the community to target over the next five years. Develop a corresponding plan of action and funding to present to Township Board.
  - Complete a master plan for the Cascade Township Recreation Park
  - Implement improvements at Wycliffe Park based on the master plan

### Goal 2:

Work with Pathways Committee to create plans that identify future pathway routes that connect to neighboring communities, regional trail systems, and continue to connect to existing community amenities and neighborhoods. *Backed by comments from the strategic plan parks and recreation focus group and previous unfulfilled goals.*

1. Identify and plan for pathway connections to regional trail systems

- Pathways committee to review existing Cascade Township Pathways map, Regional Trails Plan maps, and State Trail Plan maps, and identify future potential connections to include in pathways development plan.
2. Identify pathway routes to connect to the surrounding communities such as Ada, Lowell, Caledonia, and Grand Rapids
    - Pathways committee to review existing Pathways maps from neighboring communities including Ada, Lowell, Caledonia, Kentwood, and Grand Rapids, and communicate with neighboring pathway/parks committees to coordinate future development and pathway connections.
  3. Plan for continuation of Pathway Millage to continue to provide funding for pathway system expansions
    - Create a plan for maintenance, improvements, and future connections, and the required funding to prepare for a pathways millage when the current millage expires in 2027.
  4. Identify and prioritize critical neighborhood pathway connections and projects with a particular focus on connecting the southern half of the Township
    - Identify neighborhoods where pathway connections and connections to parks are incomplete or nonexistent and develop an implementation plan with prioritization and phasing.
    - Develop a trails master plan that identifies connections and extensions for the pathways system.

**Goal 3:**

**Refine the Township's Parks organization structure and support.** *Backed by comments from the strategic plan parks and recreation focus group, and Parks Committee meeting notes, and the parks and recreation 2021 survey results.*

1. Collaborate with the newly formed Pathways Committee to identify funding opportunities for trail development, establish trail maintenance priorities and schedule and prioritize key trail connection and routes.
  - Parks Committee member(s) attend Pathways Committee meetings as needed or have a member that is on both committees.
2. Hire additional Township staff to assist with parks and recreation.
  - Hire a Parks Director that will manage all efforts related to parks
  - Plan for additional parks staff such as a program director and seasonal maintenance staff
3. Organize Friends of Cascade Parks to aid in planning, fundraising, maintenance, and volunteer opportunities.
  - Parks committee to help establish Friends of Cascade Parks group and appoint a director of the group to coordinate volunteers and fundraising.
4. Organize a volunteer program for the parks to assist with parks efforts such as invasive species control, programming, and maintenance.
  - Appoint a person within Township Personnel to develop a contact database of volunteers within the township utilizing online volunteering platforms or other appropriate tools and communicate volunteer opportunities.

5. Review Parks Committee By-Laws and amend to best fit the needs of the Township and its residents. Use this as a model for the Pathways Committee.

**Goal 4:**

**Identify and allocate appropriate funds to acquire property, improve parks, add amenities, maintain parks, and hire staff to support the parks and pathway systems. *Backed by 2021 survey results and strategic plan focus group.***

1. Collaborate between the Parks Committee, Pathways Committee, and township personnel to review funding needs to develop a plan.
  - Committees to meet with township staff biannually to discuss needs and funding.
2. Build information, materials, and support for educating voters.
  - Create a plan that includes necessary maintenance items, desired improvements, and property acquisition goals with the required funding needs.
3. Pass a parks millage that will provide necessary funds to acquire park property, improve parks and add amenities, maintain parks, and hire staff including a parks director
  - Create materials with education on parks millage (what the funding will be used for & why it is beneficial to the Township) and post to Township website, social media, and newsletter. Utilize various methods to engage voter base.
4. Identify and apply for applicable grant opportunities
  - Parks committee to research grant opportunities available at the local, state, and federal level, and apply as applicable for desired improvements or land acquisition.
5. Explore opportunities for donors, volunteers, and fundraising

**Goal 5:**

**Preserve natural resources and open space within the township. *Backed by comments from the strategic plan parks and recreation focus group, public input surveys, and Parks Committee meeting notes.***

1. Continue Township green space preservation efforts through appropriate land acquisition
  - Create a database of properties that are desired for future acquisition utilizing the park committee acquisition template. Target acquisition efforts based on community need and opportunity.
2. Establish Thornapple River clean up and preservation initiatives and raise awareness of impacts to the water quality.
  - Parks Committee to work with Friend of Cascade Parks and/or township personnel to establish annual/bi-annual volunteer event based around Thornapple River clean up.
  - Perform testing and analysis of water quality
  - Write articles for the newsletter regarding water quality and how people can help.
3. Contain and remove invasive and diseased species throughout the township.

- Parks Committee to work with conservationists and partners to identify invasive species within the community parks and organize eradication solutions and volunteer work days.
- Continue use of township newsletter to educate residents about the types of invasive species, their impact on the local environment, and best methods for eradication.

**Goal 6:**

**Collaborate as appropriate with the Township Board to develop a park or open space that serves as a gathering space integrated with planned downtown village development outlined in the Cascade Township Strategic Plan. *Backed by 2021 survey results and strategic plan.***

1. Build consensus for the location for the gathering space
  - Create a subcommittee with representation from the Township Staff, the Parks and Recreation Committee, Planning Commission, DDA, and the Township Board
  - Organize appropriate leadership, partners, funding for the proposed gathering space
2. Implement gathering space project integrated into the village development process
  - Work with a consultant to design the proposed central gathering space and lead a public engagement process

**Goal 7:**

**Identify space for new community parks, preservation areas, and open space to serve growing population and to preserve natural features and character of the Township. *Backed by comments from the strategic plan parks and recreation focus group, the parks and recreation 2021 survey results, and building off the previous plan goals.***

1. Determine areas that lack access to parks and analyze opportunities for land acquisition.
  - (Objective 1 & 2) Compile and continuously update a database of potential properties for land acquisition and expansion of public park space and analyze potential benefit with the property acquisition template.
2. Identify land available for smaller neighborhood parks and parks with water frontage, two highly ranked types of parks desired by residents.
3. Encourage and incentivize open space, parks, or recreation areas in future residential developments.
  - Parks Committee, Planning Director, and Planning Commission should review the zoning ordinance and requirements for developers to determine appropriate provisions for open space and parks.
4. Explore joint ventures with other entities to provide access to and use of open space, water frontage, and other recreational opportunities for members of the community.
  - Parks Committee and/or Township Personnel to analyze opportunities and collaborate with entities in the community such as schools, the library, sports leagues, etc.

**Goal 8:**

**Increase publicity and awareness of parks, programs, and facilities.** *Backed by comments from the strategic plan parks and recreation focus group, and parks board meeting notes, and previous master plan goals.*

1. Further develop the parks section of the Township website to offer online facility scheduling and payments.
  - Work with Township Personnel to identify an existing position, or hire a new communications and scheduling position, to manage scheduling and payments of facilities online, including sports fields, courts, and shelters.
2. Increase the exposure of parks in Township communications.
  - Actively post parks content on Township social media and website.
  - Include parks-related information in the Township quarterly newsletters.
3. Conduct an annual review of parks maps and signage to confirm accuracy and quality.
  - Parks and pathways committee to conduct an annual review of existing signage and maps, both in the field and online. Coordinate updates as necessary.
4. Coordinate Parks branding efforts to align with Township branding, and emulate throughout new amenities and development
  - Parks committee to meet with township personnel and its marketing consultant to review annually.

**Goal 9:**

**Develop parks programming to provide residents more opportunities for recreation, education, and experiencing nature.** *Backed by 2021 survey results and strategic plan focus group.*

1. Identify partnerships and leverage resources within the community
  - Parks Committee and/or Township Personnel to analyze opportunities and make contact with entities in the community such as schools, the library, sports leagues, etc.
2. Assign recreation programming and coordination role with the existing Township Personnel or hire a Recreational Programming Director to facilitate growing Township recreation opportunities if the need is justified.
  - Parks Committee to meet with township personnel to discuss the role and responsibilities of a staff position to handle programming.
3. Develop programming for nature education, invasive species management, recreation, and other parks and recreation activities.
  - Develop pilot programming events for different topics and review effectiveness.