

Minutes

Cascade Charter Township
Parks Committee
Tuesday, May 16, 2023
8:00 A.M.
5920 Tahoe Dr SE

ARTICLE 1. Chair Wanty called the meeting to order at 8:03 A.M.
Members Present: Chair Ginny Wanty, Mike Reese, Supervisor Grace Lesperance, Joe Engel, Matt Douglas, Eileen Boekestein
Members Absent: None
Others Present: Planning Director Hilbrands, Manager Ben Swayze, Buildings and Ground Supervisor Jim MacDonald, Parks Director Melanie Manion, Township Engineer Aric Thorne, and others listed on the sign-in sheet.

ARTICLE 2. Approve the current Agenda
Motion was made by Member Engel to approve the current agenda. Supported by Member Boekestein. Motion carried 4 to 0.

ARTICLE 3. Approve the minutes of the April 18, 2023 Regular Meeting
Motion was made by Member Engel to approve the April 18, 2023 regular meeting minutes as written. Supported by Member Reese. Motion carried 4 to 0.

Member Douglas arrived at 8:04 A.M.

ARTICLE 4. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak to non-agenda items
Jeanine Heibel (6750 Burton St) noticed there has been an increase in bike traffic at Burton Park. She says the trail is unsafe for biking and is concerned about liability. Heibel suggested posting “no bike” signs at the park.

Supervisor Lesperance arrived at 8:07 A.M.

ARTICLE 5. Introduce new Parks and Recreation Director
Melanie Manion, the new Parks and Recreation Director, expressed how excited she is to be part of Cascade Township. She has a master’s degree in conservation biology and previously worked for the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, Blandford Nature Center, and spent the last 13 years working for Ottawa County Parks Department as the Natural Resource Manager.

ARTICLE 6. Update on Millage Campaign
Member Reese provided an update and said the ballot will be reviewed by legal counsel and will then come back to the Parks Committee for a recommendation to the Township Board. There is a need to hire a PR company for millage campaigning and the township will ask Sabo for a proposal.

Supervisor Lesperance asked if volunteers on the Parks Committee can campaign for the millage. Manager Swayze said anyone can campaign given that township resources are not being used.

Member Engel suggested that the committee determine how money raised through the millage will be spent before recommending a proposal to the Township Board as it will then be part of the public discussion.

Manager Swayze mentioned that Cascade recently hired a communications specialist that could assist with the millage campaign.

Director Manion said she would feel comfortable getting a few quotes from multiple public relations companies.

ARTICLE 7. Grant Opportunities

Member Reese elaborated on a few potential grant opportunities. The three DNR grants that will be the main focus include the Natural Resources Trust Fund, the Recreation Passport grant, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LCWF). Both the Natural Resource Trust Fund and LWCF could be used for property acquisition. All of these grants have an application deadline of April 1, 2024. There was another grant mentioned through the MEDC/MML called Public Spaces and Community Places, which is a crowdfunding grant. Crowdfunding grants work by setting a goal dollar amount of want to raise and the grant funder will match however much is raised.

Director Manion said most of the grants she has worked with were restoration grants such as the federal Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL). Partnering federal grants with state grants is very beneficial since they can provide match for each other. She also mentioned that invasive species grants are very targeted, with a little amount of money, and typically go to the Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMA). For potential farmland acquisition, she mentioned Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) grants. These grants are no longer issued to government entities, only directly to the farmers. Foundations can be another source of funding.

ARTICLE 8. Updates to Bylaws

Member Engel said the only change was replacing the reference to “Planning Director” with “Parks and Recreation Director”. Once the Park Committee recommends changes to their bylaws, approval of the updated version will be on the May 31 Board of Trustees agenda.

Motion was made by Member Engel to recommend approval of the updated bylaws to the Township Board. Supported by Member Douglas. Motion carried 6 to 0.

ARTICLE 9. Wycliffe Trailhead Park Update

Engineer Thorne said that Spaulding DeDecker provided a topographic survey with elevations of existing drains and catch basins. The property to the northeast has a build-up of water when it rains that doesn’t drain easily. Water appeared to back up onto the Wycliffe property from the pipe under the pathway. Engineer Thorne will be drawing up

preliminary plans to eliminate these issues and Director Manion will investigate the possibility of incorporating plantings and rain gardens.

ARTICLE 10. Cascade Rec Park Improvements and Moving Forward

There will be a special meeting on June 13 at 8:00 A.M. to discuss park improvements and create a ranking of priorities for these improvements. The goal is to eventually creating an RFP for these projects and \$25,000 is already included in the budget for that purpose.

ARTICLE 11. Old Business

Update on plan for adding trees at Rec Park – Director Manion said she is looking at different species of trees and is leaning towards a mixture of larger trees and shrubs that will be adapting to a warmer climate.

Update on Theule property- Member Engel has not received a response from the attorney handling the Theule property issues, but believes the family is still working on reaching a consensus for sale of the property.

Update on property off Spaulding – Planning Director Hilbrands reached out to the property owner and has not heard back. Sign advertising “homes coming soon” is now blank.

Update on discussion with Phil Skaggs – Supervisor Lesperance will be reaching back out to Representative Skaggs. Representative Skaggs is interested in the Burton Street bridge replacement because it connects the two communities he represents-Cascade and Kentwood.

Update regarding Forest Hills Admin Building – Supervisor Lesperance gave an update on the meeting with Forest Hills Schools. They are required to sell for fair market value and are anticipating putting the property on the market next year.

ARTICLE 12. Any Other Business

Dykema Excavation Properties – Director Manion said the property off Burton is likely undevelopable.

Update on process for new Parks Committee Members – Supervisor Lesperance received a new Parks Committee member recommendation to fill the vacancy.

ARTICLE 13. Adjournment

Motion was made by Member Engel to adjourn the meeting. Supported by Supervisor Lesperance. Motion carried 6 to 0. The meeting adjourned at 9:36 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Engel, Secretary