

Chikaming Township Park Board Regular Meeting – APPROVED

November 22, 2021

Chikaming Township Large Meeting Room

The November 22, 2021 regular meeting of the Park Board was called to order at 6:39PM by Chair Arthur Anderson. Also present were board members Kathy Sellers, Sherri Curry, Steve Ellis, Garth Taylor, Jill Underhill and Shelly Taylor, along with members of the community both in-person and via Zoom.

**NATIONAL ANTHEM:** Led by Anderson

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** No objections, Approved

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Joseph Reed – Thanking board for motion to protect wildlife corridor. Would like public input about who wants trail through wildlife corridor, public may want to see money allocated for things they voted on during survey, protect and preserve wetland area. Would like this added during discussion: “With respect to the consistency of Chikaming Township Park Board’s Master Plan, why are we departing from previous decision to protect wildlife corridor and natural areas within the park system? Where is the public in specific support of the plan to spend taxpayer money developing and maintaining wetland permitted trails?”

Fran Wersells – Harbert Community Park reminds her of Ramble in Central Park, we have many preserves that offer trails, this area is treasure for wildlife.

Pijus Stoncius – Demographic study of children who live within walking distance to use potential parcel in Union Pier, parking is a problem. What will we provide for neighbors to protect lights/sound/noise?

Enrico Heirman – Gladly move presentation to future, everyone doing a fabulous job, great things going on in Harbert Community Park (hats off to Garth), Cherry Beach and Harbert Beach stairs were a huge accomplishment, Pier St. looking forward and now listening to public and being good neighbors.

Laru Chapman – Wildlife corridor is primary concern (deer, turtles, etc.), won’t be a destination trail but rather a place to sneak off to, trail doesn’t serve a big enough purpose to warrant the consequences.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

Hanna – \$500 donation towards Miller Beach and removal of invasive

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** October Regular Meeting Minutes, No objections, Approved

**TREASURER’S REPORT:** \$63,957.95 is current balance.

**REPORTS:** In packet

Manager Alex – finished building inspection and working on correcting issues with Josh, winterizing parks, Rennie setting up ice rink in next week or 3, working on implementing donations through Venmo.

Curry – Dog Park – Ted Hanson in favor of bricks for flooring, 3 gates and one is failing and needs new latch as it is a liability issue, Ted’s advice was huge help.

G. Taylor – Harbert Community Park –

**HCP SUMMER 2021 USAGE STUDY** – sent around, add to minutes, Dog Park, Dog Park Shelter, volleyball court, playground, pond

**VOLUNTEERS** – Thanked for 18 weeks of service. Recently completed area near picnic pavilion, re-plant with long grass and wildflowers.

Names circulated to all PG: hopefully leadership will come forward to maintain the group during winter months and beyond.

**PRIORITIES 2022 & BEYOND**

**Low-cost big =>Change scope of contracted Phase 1 work**

- Extend ADA walkway along the pond, benches, electrical to stage, Dog Park shelter platform

### **Altamanu design assistance**

- Boulevard area – County & Twp property . . .
- Expand playground/discovery area
- Trees, paths, other planting areas: habitat along pond; Rotary – pollinator garden
- Make all/part of the volleyball area a “Beach” – get a couple of Adirondack chairs

### **Longer Range**

- Improve the pond – add fountain, raise level
- Concession stand – Jill Underhill

Summary from G. Taylor:

## **USAGE PATTERNS IN HARBERT COMMUNITY PARK --**

Summer/Fall 2021

Garth Taylor, Ph.D.

From September 16, 2021 to October 23, 2021 I made 108 visits to Harbert Community Park at random times during the daylight hours between 7:00 am and 8:00 pm (20:00) (EDT). I used a coding sheet to write down the day of the week, time of day, and what I saw. In the social science literature, this is an observational study -- frequently used to determine how people use public places.

· WHO AM I? Dog lover; PhD in Sociology U of Chicago, specialized training in research and statistics; Taught research methods for 8 years at U of Chicago; Chief Executive of a research company in Chicago for 19 years. I used to get paid to do this

### **DOG PARK USAGE**

Methodology: Drive to the park, count the number of dogs, observe for 1-2 minutes, re-count the dogs, exit the park.

· In 3-4 cases as I arrived there was a car leaving w/a dog or as I was leaving a car arrived with a dog – these dogs were added to the count

· I visited mostly on sunny days. If it was raining and there were no dogs, I didn't count the day; on the 1-2 occasions when it was raining and there were dogs, I counted them. This leads to a small upward bias in the average number of dogs using the park.

Findings:

- Almost 2/3 of the time there were zero dogs in the dog park;
- 25% of the time there were 1-2 dogs
- 10% of the time there were 3+ dogs – mostly when paid dog walkers were there

- The largest number in the park was 5 dogs, this happened once.
- The average number of dogs per visit is 0.6 -- i.e., less than 1.0
- Most dog walkers are middle age, or older adults.
- I observed 2 paid dog walkers who would bring 2 or 3 dogs. This accounts for at least half of the ten visits when I observed 3 or more dogs in the park.
- When there are two or more dog walkers, they tend to socialize around the shelter, or sit at the picnic table. When there were 2 or more dog walkers, they often congregated at the shelter. It is a naturally occurring “third place” -- i.e., an informal place away from home or work where people spend time together. Very important for building communities.
- From the beginning of the study (mid-September) to mid-October the picnic table was placed beside the shelter. In mid-October it was moved to under the shelter
- There were dogs in the park every day of the week.

The time of heaviest use is 6:00 pm (18:00) where, over 13 visits, I saw an average of about 2 dogs in the park per visit.

The second heaviest time of use is mid-morning (9:00 am, 10:00 am) when there is an average of about 1 dog in the park.

#### Conclusions:

- There is no need to expand the size of the dog park. There is no need for a third fenced off area. 90% of the time there are zero, one or two dogs in the park.
- For those who use it, the dog park is a “third place” for socializing outside home and work, and should be improved as such.
- The shelter area is a focal point for socializing. The experience of the shelter area can be improved with a level ground platform (8' x 12') such as a deck or stone pavement and a step or ramp down to allow easy movement of the picnic table on and off the platform.
- Park Board should also consider installation of infra-red heaters in the shelter

#### OTHER PARK USES During my 108 visits I also observed:

- The playground was almost always in use during daylight hours
- The volleyball court was never in use -- PB should consider leaving 1-2 nets down and consider alternative uses of the space – e.g. a sandy playground, a large fire ring
- There is evidence of people using the picnic/viewing area at the north end of the pond.

- About half the time on weekends there were people fishing in the pond.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** In packet, marked as read. (Endorsing park but not bank shot basketball)

**OLD BUSINESS:**

2022-2023 budget:

Motion by Anderson to recommend budget to township board, as is. Supported by G. Taylor.

S. Curry - formulated to be effective with 40 hr. full time park manager, wanted to see 2 budgets - 1 with manager and 1 without. Unsure if work reports substantiate need for increase, possibly wait another year.

Sellers - budget is compilation of everyone's requests, won't be approved as is.

Anderson - beach construction is out because stairs were done at only one beach

S. Curry moved to put beach construction back to last year, so add \$5,000 for a total of \$15,000,

Supported by Sellers. Vote: 4 yes, 3 no, moved.

Anderson wants full time manager for grant writing, donation program, etc.

Underhill - desperately need full time manager, 100% support, Sellers agrees

Roll Call Vote:

S. Taylor - yes

Sellers - yes

Anderson - yes

Underhill - yes

G. Taylor - yes

Curry - yes

Ellis - yes

Union Pier Parcel - Moved by S. Curry that Park Board continues to explore possible uses for park but bank shot basketball be taken off the table, due to public comment, Supported by G. Taylor

Anderson - Owner said very much in favor of bank shot but not necessarily a deal breaker

Sellers - What is the criteria for accepting donation? When do we decide if we'll accept?

G. Taylor - get consensus of neighbors of what would be acceptable in park, meet with neighbors to get feedback

Underhill - township board wants to know if we'll accept gift

Ellis - What are we willing to do? Naming rights, art center, bank shot, our mission was to acquire more property

S. Taylor - neighbors have spoken, lets focus now on what they DO want

All in favor: 7, Opposed 0, Motion Carried

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Bid on Harbert Community Park - postpone motion on bid, waiting on financials from Green Construction

Underhill - anxious to move forward, will call and get feedback

G. Taylor - wants to wait until Dec. meeting

No objection to postponing

Moved by Anderson to designate the northern area in Harbert Community Park as protected wildlife area. No paths or other construction would be allowed in the area and members of the public would be discouraged from walking in that area, Supported by Sellers.

Anderson - we should have path not obtrusive, people already walking through, won't raise number, path makes it safer, damaging to planting how they're walking now.

Sellers - leave it the way it is, natural and peaceful, better to meander than stay on trail with

Grandchildren. Protocol for doing this? Same as neighbors not wanting basketball in backyard and we listened to them, phases should be discussed when working over there. If it doesn't pass then we'll organize plans in Phase 2. What about path in south part?

G. Taylor – summary of notes: Well-marked, well-maintained pathways will be a safe, environmentally sound way for parents and their children to experience the woods, the pond, and the wetland in Harbert Community Park. Park Board decisions need to represent the collective interests of the **2,778 residents** of Chikaming Township.

- The **Ethics Handbook for Michigan Municipalities**, in its chapter *Improper Use of Position* (p35) states: “A public servant shall not take any action or create the appearance of giving preferential treatment to any organization or person.”

- I believe it is not ethical for the Park Board to accede to one person's wish to determine the use of the northern 25% of Harbert Community Park.

I therefore oppose the resolution, but would favor an accommodation with the neighbor who wants to keep people away by placing 2-3 advisory signs 20’ before the northern boundary of H C Park that say “Private Property Ahead.”

S. Taylor – if you want wooded area, head to preserve, keep some natural areas, why can’t path go along edge but not through wooded area?

Ellis – being sensitive to environment, how to preserve trails without disturbing natural habitat, should do this on all properties.

Curry – Nothing will be done without detailed plan so this allows open ideas

Underhill – lots of places to walk trails, such a small area to put a trail, don’t do something just because you can, every board in township considers feelings of neighbors, we’re supposed to do that and Reed’s are the only neighbors, no value in adding trail there, not taking anything away by not putting trail in

G. Taylor – “Private Property Ahead” signs, not a green light for paths, this isn’t the place to vote it down

Sellers – we all have felt we shouldn’t overdevelop, 75% is already developed so why touch 25% more?

Anderson – bridge over stream

Underhill – Garth should survey how many people walk there

Ellis – encourage people with signs to stay on path, dogs shouldn’t be allowed on path

Roll Call Vote:

Ellis – no

Curry – no

G. Taylor – no

Underhill – yes

Anderson – no

Sellers – yes

S. Taylor – yes

3 Yes, 4 No, Motion Failed

Elections next meeting

Moved by Anderson to change meeting date from December 27, 2021 to December 13, 2021 and to hold elections on that day, Supported by Underhill, All in favor: 7, Motion Carried.

#### QUESTION AND ANSWER:

Rick Augustiniak – wrote letter in 1993 offering to buy property from Mr. Witt, sell property and make donation to build bank shot at another location, use money instead of property.

Fran Wersells – Questioned if there was a job description for manager, Yes there is. Chain of supervision, been loosely watched. Answer: He’s accountable to all 7 of us, Anderson meets with Alex everyday.

Pius Stoncius – Agrees with Rick on buying property, thinks park board should taken it if he won’t sell, don’t overdevelop anything.

Enrico Heirman - wants a win/ win, likes Rick's idea, donation should be unrestricted. Work with neighbors to support happy medium. Do more committee work, opposing opinions can hash it out for a win-win.

Joseph Reed - appreciates consideration of motion, keep hashing it out for a win-win.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Caroling on Dec. 5

Next regular meeting is December 13, 2021.

**ADJOURN:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:46PM with no objections.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Shelly Taylor