

CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP PARK BOARD MEETING - APPROVED

OCTOBER 24, 2022

The October 24, 2022 meeting of the Park Board was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Jill Underhill, Curry, Sellers, G. Taylor, and Ellis present, at Chikaming Township Center. Parz and S. Taylor were absent. Also present, several members of the community.

The Agenda was given to the board, Sellers moved, G. Taylor supported, to adopt the Agenda. All ayes, motion carried. A motion was made by Ellis, supported by Sellers, to approve the Minutes of the September 26, 2022 meeting as submitted. All ayes, motion carried.

A motion was made by Sellers, supported by G. Taylor, to approve the Minutes of the October 10, 2022 special meeting as submitted. All ayes, motion carried. The Treasurer's report was read by Treasurer Sellers. Sellers reported working budget balance is \$72,107.40. A motion to approve the Treasurer's report was made by Underhill, supported by G. Taylor.

All ayes, motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE: None PUBLIC COMMENT: None

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS: A Holiday Carols & Lights Event committee was formed comprised of Shelly Taylor, Kathy Sellers and Sherri Curry; the event will take place on December 4 at 4:30 pm at Harbert Community Park. It is anticipated that students from the music department at River Valley Schools may participate. Kathy Sellers spoke to the board and said she would be resigning from the park board, regardless of the outcome of the referendum. She stated personal reasons and if necessary, agreed to stay on until the '23-'24 budget is approved. The Chair asked if any members wanted to share their experiences on the PB or why they wanted to be on the Park Board. Garth Taylor said that he wanted to be on the Park Board to get rid of the baseball field and put something else in there that people would want to come to and enjoy. He went on to say that even though it took twice as long in a process that had some unexpected features, he's actually very proud of the fact that that got done and that it is cumulative, other people are coming forward now to participate in the further development of that, which is kind of the idea to create a platform where people can

come in and do more, so that part has been successful. Steve Ellis said that he came on the Board not particularly knowing what he was getting into, he said that he's lived here a long time, he's been to a few meetings, but he has enjoyed working, his history in community service has been in conservation easements, naturalizing areas, invasive species, planting trees, and there's ample amount of things to do here with the Park Board, he's enjoyed doing those things. Sherri Curry said that after working at the Cherry Beach parking lot for a couple of years, she wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to service the community from what she'd already seen and ways to help folks out, service to the community, it's been a challenging ride and a privilege to participate this far.

Jill Underhill said that she joined the Park Board in 2015 because she had a need to serve and give back to the community. She is proud of her accomplishments including writing procedures and policies, leading projects to completion, including the beautiful fountain at HCP, securing donations of furniture, goods and services. She said that she has worked hard and served with passion and love for the community. She concluded that it has been an honor and a privilege to serve the people of Chikaming Township.

Garth Taylor read David Bunte's written statement regarding the referendum to dissolve the Park Board: "Should the proposal for the dissolution of the current Park Board pass, the Township is prepared to assemble a committee to evaluate the needs of the park system, then make a recommendation to the board on how best to proceed. Multiple individuals with experience in this process and understanding of other park systems, have expressed an interest in working with the Township in this endeavor. Additionally, we have numerous park departments in our area that can assist with the initial development of the department and how best to structure a department based on Chikaming's specific needs. Due to the seasonal changes, we would not expect any lapse in service or maintenance during this transition. All responsibilities will be absorbed by the township staff until the new structure is in place."

PUBLIC COMMENT: Fran Wersells, Union Pier – Fran stated that she read a letter in the newspaper written by Sue Phelan and Peggy McTigue with whom she worked briefly as one of the original members of the Cherry Beach Committee. She stated that it's her recollection that EnRico Heirman, former Chair of the Park Board, is the person who got the whole ball rolling. He had a public meeting with a large presentation board and he asked people to step forward and who would be willing to work on this committee. It all started in 2015 with a meeting with former supervisor, Wayne Warner, where they went over the development plans for the the Reed Beidler property and all were shocked. She went on to say that multiple questions were asked about the expansion plans, and the project moved forward, and it was a marvelous success for the committee and most importantly for the whole entire township. She

stated that she takes issue with their letter saying that they want a Park Board that is efficient, responsive and accountable. Fran said that she has a Master's in Public Administration from Johns Hopkins, and she thinks efficiency is overrated, that the most efficient form of government is a dictatorship, or an autocracy, which she believes five people on a board who are going to make those decisions is kind of an autocracy. She believes that if the public is removed from that equation, a lot will be lost, including community involvement; personal relationships are why we're here. This is a community that she wants to keep. She comes to these meetings to know people, she stated that she has no other agenda; she wants people to be informed and she wants to know the people who are in her community. She went on to say that efficiency is not an argument that she's going to listen to. Responsiveness? She stated that the board has been very responsive. When there's been a need for trees cut or beach stairs swept, all it took was a phone call and within a week the work was done. Accountability? This is what really troubles her. Because she missed the October 13th meeting, she came to the Township offices on October 20 and Oct. 24 to review the consent agenda package, and it starts with the draft minutes of that meeting. She said that she learned just about nothing by reading the minutes of the township board meeting. She learned who voted, what was approved, what wasn't approved. If one wants to know what the Building Dept. is doing, the ZBA, the Planning Commission is doing, the Water Dept. is doing, one must read the consent agenda packet which is not given to anybody but the board members, but of course it's available for anybody to read at any time. She went on to say that if we are going to go to a Parks Dept. it's not going to be discussed at the regular Township Board meetings because she believes that David wants short, efficient meetings and that's all there is to it. Her water bill went up 25%, she said it was never discussed in any Township board meeting but she believes it was discussed at some Water Dept. meeting, and she had no say in that and everyone was as surprised as she was. She thinks the PB has been as efficient as she would like, as responsive as it needs to be, and incredibly accountable, especially when the meetings have press coverage, and she is part of that accountability to make sure people know what's going on. Susan Phelan, Lakeside – Susan stated that she wanted to say that this is the first time she's seen the statement from David Bunte in writing, however, in casual conversations over the weeks in talking with him about other matters, like the Township newsletter that she's involved in, he has basically said this kind of thing for some time now, so this isn't news; it's just the first time that it's been in writing. She said that he has been consistent on that, and that he has taken no position. Fran Wersells – She stated that she believes that David Bunte is taking a position, that Jocelyn VerLee wrote to him about a new parks dept. having no advisory council; that it should only consist of three employees, and David responded that he is leaning toward agreement with her. Fran went on to say that if that's not a position, she doesn't know what is.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Garth Taylor acknowledged David Bunte for making a statement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 28, 2022.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made by G. Taylor, and supported by Sellers, to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 p.m. All ayes, motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jill Underhill, Chair (filling in for Secretary S. Taylor)

Amended: G. Taylor commented that the proposed minutes of the Oct. 24, 2022 Park Board meeting do not reflect the discussion or the tenor of the meeting that actually took place. In the light of the dissolution of the Park Board in the November 8 referendum vote, however, there are more relevant issues to address in the few remaining moments of viability of this body.