

Meeting Minutes
Cascade Charter Township
Pathways Committee
Thursday, February 2, 2023
10:00 am
5920 Tahoe Dr

ARTICLE 1. Chair Rissi called the meeting to order at 10:01 am.

Members Present: John Driscoll, Kris Taylor, Mike Reese, Rik Brown, Scott Rissi, Jeff Coffey

Others Present: Building and Grounds (B&G) Supervisor Jim MacDonald, Planning Director Brian Hilbrands, Township Engineer Aric Thorne, and Management Office Admin Assistant Jessica Stine, and others listed on the sign in sheet

Absent: Township Supervisor Grace Lesperance

ARTICLE 2. Approve the current Agenda

Motion was made by Member Brown to approve the current Agenda. Supported by Member Reese. Motion carried 5 to 0.

ARTICLE 3. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak to non-agenda items.

There weren't any visitors who wished to speak at this time.

ARTICLE 4. Approval for the Minutes of the 12.1.22 and 12.12.22 Meetings

Motion was made by Member Reese to approve the 12.1.22 meeting minutes as written. Supported by Member Brown. Motion carried.

Motion was made by Member Brown to approve the 12.12.22 meeting minutes as written. Supported by Member Reese. Motion carried.

ARTICLE 5. Guest – Parks Committee Chair Ginny Wanty

Parks Committee Chair Ginny Wanty attended the meeting to talk about the new Parks Director position that will oversee the Parks and Pathways Committees. It will be posted shortly with interviews beginning in the next couple weeks.

Chair Wanty also spoke about the outdoor gathering space project that the library is working on. She suggested Lulu Brown, the Regional Manager II at the Cascade and Caledonia branches of the Kent District Library, be invited to a Pathways meeting to talk about creating a pathway that connects the library to the rest of Cascade's pathway system. The West Michigan Conservation Network (WMCN) was touted as a beneficial resource and there was conversation about members attending a land management plan creation meeting WMCN will be hosting.

The Grand River Greenway Project is another far reaching project in Michigan that Chair Wanty believes Cascade Township should partner on. The project maps are currently in the works but not yet ready to be shared. The project requested \$10 million of ARPA funds and received \$15 million. This included money for trail heads, trail development, tunnels, bridges, and creation of paths. There will be a Kent County Parks Committee meeting on June 22nd where more information will be available.

The WMCN won a Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) grant to clean up invasive species and along the river near Burton St is being considered as a potential cleanup site.

Member Coffey asked if the Parks Committee was prioritizing removal of Oriental Bittersweet. Chair Wanty said that they have prioritized it and WMCN has already planned work days to address Oriental Bittersweet this summer. They are also dealing with Japanese Knotweed and Garlic Mustard.

Hammerhead worms, an invasive species from South Asia, were brought up by Member Coffey as another invasive species that will need to be on naturalist's radar. They hunt other worms, are toxic to animals, and any pieces cut off of them regenerate into entirely new worms.

ARTICLE 6. 2024-2027 Reconstruction Plan

Seal coating on the 36th St to Cahoon pathway was missed on the 2024-2027 Reconstruction Plan, since it is a much newer pathway, so Engineer Thorne will add it in the appropriate year of the plan. Member Brown and the residents of Cascade Woods congratulated Engineer Thorne on his pathway improvement planning progress.

Once approved, there is potential for the reconstruction to begin in March.

Motion was made by Member Brown for Engineer Thorne to update the board on the 2024-2027 Reconstruction Plan. Supported by Member Reese. Motion carried 6 to 0.

ARTICLE 7. Discussion of Future Pathway Expansion Plan

Members shared suggestions for new pathways.

Member Coffey suggested along 28th St and Buttrick from 36th St to Cascade Road where there are many walkers, no shoulder, and the Road Commission has said they couldn't add a shoulder or decreased the speed there, legally. Chair Rissi said that, from Cascade Rd east to Lowell, there is a similar situation.

Chair Rissi suggested the section of path from 28th St from Buttrick to the Lowell bike route. This would connect with the Grand River Greenway and already has many walkers. Member Driscoll said that it was very hilly with many ravines which would make it cost prohibitive. Member Reese suggested connecting via Bolt Dr. instead because that would also connect Peace Park and that is another dangerous area for walkers. Additional discussion ensued regarding the possibility that having a path along Bolt would enable many more walkers to access the Peace Park by walking versus having to drive to the Grand River entrance to the park. Bolt access might also require less parking space at the Grand River spot.

South of Whitneyville Ave and over to 48th St was another of Chair Rissi's suggestions. That curve is considered one of the most dangerous in the state. The state may have to address that curve due to how dangerous it is, in which case it may involve changes to the bridge giving us an opportunity for a safe crossing option without construction of a pedestrian bridge.

Long term, they suggested M-6 to south of Caledonia and Henry B Thornapple but getting to and over 48th St will be the hardest part. Wanty shared that the Caledonia supervisor wants to connect the two townships along the Thornapple.

Member Driscoll suggested prioritizing safety when choosing where to create new paths. This would put areas like 28th St and the southern end of the township higher on the list. Member Coffey believed this would also elevate South Buttrick because it is a very walkable and bikeable section but the bridge is one lane with a 30° turn and is very dangerous.

Planning Director Hilbrands asked if the Laraway Lake path was still a short-term priority. The committee agreed that it was and Planning Director Hilbrands said it would be discussed at the next meeting.

ARTICLE 8. Township Strategic Plan and Parks Master Plan

The Parks Master Plan was completed, so now the township will be able to apply for grant funding; this also applies to the Pathways Committee. The members will work on prioritizing and phasing the sections of new pathway that they believe would be most beneficial. Member Brown urged to committee not to lose sight of their focus on maintenance.

Member Reese explained the Township Strategic Plan and, though it is more focused on parks, there were maps included in the packet that also applied to the Pathways Committee.

ARTICLE 9. Signage

Resident Kathy Taylor suggested adding crossing signs with bright road stripes along 28th St to alert drivers of the pedestrian crossing and protect pedestrians. Chair Rissi asked about pedestrian crossing signs with LED lights being added at some of the more dangerous spots where pathways cross the road. Member Brown suggested the addition of permanent speed check signs along Cascade Rd. Planning Director Hilbrands said he would speak with the Kent County Road Commission and Deputy Dieppa to see what would be allowed.

ARTICLE 10. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak

There weren't any visitors who wished to speak at that time.

ARTICLE 11. Any Other Business

There may be an updated Pathways map available at the next meeting.

The Laraway Lake path enhancement was brought back up and members were interested in restarting the discussion. Manager Swayze will reach out to them.

ARTICLE 12. Adjournment

Motion was made by Member Taylor to adjourn. Supported by Member Brown. Motion carried 6 to 0. The meeting was adjourned at 11:36am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rik Brown, Secretary