

## Meeting Minutes

Cascade Charter Township  
Parks Committee  
Monday, January 18, 2022  
8:00 AM  
2870 Jacksmith Ave SE

- ARTICLE 1.** Chairperson Wanty called the meeting to order at 8:04 am.  
Members Present: Joe Engel, Chair Ginny Wanty, Supervisor Grace Lesperance, Mike Reese, and Windy Korstange  
Members Absent: Matt Douglas
- Others Present: Interim Planning Director Brian Hilbrands, Rachel Walsh with Troyer Group
- ARTICLE 2. Welcome new Committee Member**
- New member Windy Korstange was welcomed to the Parks Committee
- ARTICLE 3. Approve the current Agenda**
- Motion was made by Supervisor Lesperance to approve the current Agenda. Supported by Member Engel. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- ARTICLE 4. Approve the minutes of the November 16, November 30, and December 6, 2021 meetings.**
- Motion was made by Member Engel to approve the November 16, 2021 meeting minutes. Supported by Supervisor Lesperance. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- Motion was made by Supervisor Lesperance to approve the November 30, 2021 meeting minutes. Supported by Member Engel. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- Motion was made by Member Engel to approve the December 6, 2021 meeting minutes. Supported by Supervisor Lesperance. Motion carried 5 to 0.**
- ARTICLE 5. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak to non-agenda items.**
- There was no one present who wished to speak.
- ARTICLE 6. Township Follow-up on Previous Public Comments**
- Interim Planning Director Hilbrands said that Manager Swayze has not heard anything new from the Sheriff's department about the cameras. On the Porta-a-potty for the Pickleball court, the township orders Porta-potties in the spring so they will add an additional one to their normal order to be placed near the Pickleball court on a trial basis. He did not have anything to report on the potential for placing a gate at Burton Park.
- ARTICLE 7. Status of Parks Committee Email and Open Meeting Question**

There was confusion as to if the Parks Committee has to comply with the Open Meetings Act. In the bylaws it states that the committee follows the Open Meetings Act but, since the Parks Committee is advisory only, some members thought that meant the Open Meetings Act did not apply. Interim Planning Director Hilbrands and Supervisor Lesperance agreed to talk to the township lawyer about this and, if the committee isn't required to follow the act by law, they may request the Township Board allow them to amend their bylaws. Revisiting the bylaws will be added to the February agenda. The township is changing to a cloud-based server in April and then the Parks Committee will have a general email address so that they can communicate with residents without sharing their personal information.

**ARTICLE 8. Update on Oak Wilt Situation at Burton Park**

Member Engel said that Manager Swayze provided him with contact information for a resident of Cascade Farms who may allow the township to drive through their property to access the oak wilt at Burton Park. Member Engel will follow up with the property owner. Three out of four companies said that they don't want to go near the driveway. They'd rather go through the grass where there is only a slight incline. There is currently a cottonwood tree in the way that would have to be removed but Building and Grounds Supervisor MacDonald does not think the property owner would have a problem with that. They also mentioned that they could potentially plant a new tree if they had to remove the cottonwood tree.

An oak wilt information sheet from MSU Extension was included in the packet. Supervisor Lesperance praised Chair Wanty's presentation at the last Township Board meeting and said the audience seemed interested and engaged.

Chair Wanty shared that the township is having a difficult time getting bids on the oak wilt project. There have been four bids to take out the trees and only one bid for the trenching. She said there will be a meeting next Thursday to discuss if they want to push the tree removal to November of 2022 and accept a trenching bid or if they are going to push it all until November 2022. The state has a vibratory plow that communities can use for trenching. This year the state said there was too much cable that needed to be laid, so they didn't allow counties to use the plow for vibratory trenching. The Cascade Township Oak Wilt Consultant is certain that communities will be able to use the plow this November but will need to find out cost and availability. In Cascade Burton Park, oak wilt site #1 has 67 trees that need to be removed and it is in its second year of oak wilt. Oak wilt site #2 is in its first year and only has one triple trunk tree that needs to be removed. At the Thursday meeting they will also talk about if they want to consider only removing the tree at site two immediately, either by the township Building and Grounds crew or hiring someone to remove it, as it is a large, triple trunk tree, and its removal could stop the spread at that site. The consultant, Julie Stachecki, thinks that there will only be an additional ten trees if trenching and removal does not occur until November 2022.

Chair Wanty has reached out to the state forest management planner for resources. Nick Sanchez, who used to be the forester for Kent County and now works for the Land

Conservancy, has volunteered to do a walkthrough in the spring to check for oak wilt but the tricky part is that he won't be able to see up in the tree's branches. This could be accomplished with the assistance of a drone but they would need to get special permission for its use because there is an airport in Cascade Township. Every conservation district is supposed to have access to a forester but currently Kent, Montcalm, and Ionia counties haven't re-hired a forester since the last one left. When this position is filled, residents can have a forester visit their property to give them forest health advice for free. There are residents near the current oak wilt sites that would like to have someone come check their trees and provide advice. Member Engel said that Bartlett will also come out, assess the trees, and recommend a course of action for free but they are also looking for tree work.

**ARTICLE 9. Discussion with Buildings and Grounds Supervisor**

Supervisor Jim MacDonald talked about each park and any maintenance needed.

Rec Park: Overall Rec Park is doing well, but the roof of the gazebo needs to be replaced. They want to keep the same aesthetic, replacement parts, and style among all the buildings in the park so they will look into what type of roofing would be best. Their maintenance building needs to be replaced but other projects are currently higher on the township's priority list. The township is looking to hire an inhouse engineer/project manager who would be perfect to work on this type of project. The blacktop on the way to the gazebo is completely crumbled and can't be fixed. It will need to be completely redone. The ball fields are infested with weeds and the bases need to be taken out and redone. They would need to hire someone who is a ball field expert to reset everything. Member Engel said the committee is probably looking at a half a million-dollar project to fix this park back to acceptable.

Chair Wanty suggested these items be included in the Master Plan and five-year plan. Chair Wanty and Supervisor Lesperance shared that it is helpful to have B&G Supervisor MacDonald at these meetings as he is an expert on the parks and they want him to feel like he has somewhere to go with his concerns. How this maintenance is going to be funded will be a big question this year. Member Korstange asked if there was a millage paying for any part of the park maintenance and was told that there is currently a pathway maintenance millage but not one for the parks. If the township wants to look at offering programming at the parks and expanding their offerings, that would require more paid positions such as a Parks Director. B&G Supervisor MacDonald asked where the new port-a-potty would be placed and Interim Planning Director Hilbrands said they were thinking of putting it between the pickleball courts and the dog park.

Peace Park: Supervisor MacDonald did not have any concerns for Peace Park except that there are many people who have wanted to donate benches for the park. Due to supply chain issues, they are backlogged by at least a year. The Parks Committee will further look into the process of people donating benches and think about how it could be used for a park's fundraiser, similar to what Ada did. Chair Wanty would like to see the form the township gives people looking to donate benches. Member Reese suggested the committee create a wish list of improvements they would like to see

completed. Member Engel mentioned creating a list of donations people could make at a variety of price points.

Burton Park: The dirt parking lot is a trap. It is at the worst angle and people get stuck in it. FTC & H was hired for the project and it has had problems from the start. It is too small of a lot and people have difficulty getting out. Member Engel asked if there was room to reengineer the lot to be more usable and Supervisor MacDonald said that the nearby residents do not want a parking lot near their property due to it becoming a potential site for drug use and other illicit activities (though Building and Grounds hasn't ever seen any sign of that). Foot traffic on the road to Burton Park has become so heavy that Building and Grounds has a difficult time getting through. B&G Supervisor MacDonald said that they would eventually need a foot path separate from the road.

Tassell Park: There is a broken handrail and the dock and the boardwalk are damaged. They would like to switch from wood to something else that does well in wet areas. The pillars in the parking lot need to be regouted. Previous Director Peterson had said he shared this information with Fishbeck to work out a plan on how to fix these problems but Supervisor MacDonald said he never heard anything back on it. Multiple committee members expressed concern about the amount of money the township is paying Fishbeck compared to the quality of product they are getting back.

Interim Planning Director Hilbrands said that he thinks the Engineer/Project Manager position may solve some of these problems. The committee doesn't understand why Fishbeck is contracted for all township projects when the cost is so high and the projects aren't being bid out. Staff will try to see what routine maintenance projects they can get quotes for in the meantime. The Committee would like there to be a parks budget so they know what they can improve, fix, and spend. Supervisor Lesperance said that she hasn't seen anything come up on the Township Board level in relation to Fishbeck and contracts or funding.

#### **ARTICLE 10. Parks Master Plan Discussion**

The committee talked through the objectives from the previous Master Plan and to review park data and public engagement. Member Reese asked everyone for one or two goals they would like on the new Master Plan. Member Engel suggested that acquisition and protection of green space be near the top of the list. Chair Wanty agreed and suggested community engagement be added to the list (whether that's getting more volunteers, hosting classes, wildflower walks, etc.). She is also unclear how the pathways system works and hopes to learn more about that at a future meeting. Getting a parks director is also high on her list of priorities. Member Korstange echoed Member Engel's sentiment about green space and added that she thinks the community needs to get more involved in parks decisions so they know what type of amenities the community wants as time goes on. Supervisor Lesperance said she prioritized acquisition and preservation of green space/natural areas first and a close second would be maintaining what they have and community engagement. Member Korstange added the safety of walking on pathways that run close to the road and the lack of pleasant aesthetic as so many trees needed to be cut down for it and

weren't ever replaced. They talked about adding an ordinance about replacing trees that are removed during this type of construction.

**ARTICLE 11. Property Acquisition Checklist**

Member Engel met with Rob Beahan and Mr. Theule to begin talking about the Theule property next to Peace Park and how the township could work on acquiring it. Member Engel is also working on the property acquisitions check list.

**ARTICLE 12. Strategic Plan Update**

Member Reese shared that there are still surveys coming in and the survey will be ending on January 28<sup>th</sup>. Member Korstange recommended adding the end date to the social media posts about the survey as she sees them daily and hasn't found an end date anywhere. Member Reese said that they will need a longer meeting in the future to go over the survey and prepare for the strategic plan.

**ARTICLE 13. Old Business**

There was not any other business to discuss.

**ARTICLE 14. Any Other Business**

Ralph Moxley expressed interest in serving on the Parks Committee at the previous Township Board meeting. The members believe he would be a welcome addition but it says the committee is made up of five members in the bylaws. They will recommend he attends meetings as a private citizen if he would like to contribute to Parks Committee discussions.

**ARTICLE 15. Adjournment**

**Motion was made by Member Reese to adjourn. Supported by Supervisor Lesperance. Motion carried 5 to 0.**

**The Meeting adjourned at 9:49 am.**

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Engel, Secretary