

Meeting Minutes
Cascade Charter Township
Parks Committee
Tuesday, June 21, 2022
8:00 AM
5920 Tahoe Dr SE

ARTICLE 1. Chair Wanty called the meeting to order at 8:01 am.
Members Present: Chair Ginny Wanty, Joe Engel, Mike Reese, Windy Korstange,
Supervisor Grace Lesperance,
Members Absent: Matt Douglas

Others Present: Planning Director Brian Hilbrands, Building and Grounds Supervisor Jim MacDonald, Planning Administrative Assistant Madi Dodge, Rachel Walsh with Troyer Group, and those 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 Supervisor Lesperance. Motion carried 5 to 0.

ARTICLE 3. Approve the minutes of the May 17, 2022 meeting and the May 31, Special Meeting.

Motion was made by Supervisor Lesperance to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2022 meeting as written. Supported by Member Engel. Motion carried 5 to 0.

Motion was made by Member Engel to approve the May 31, 2022 Special Meeting minutes as written. Supported by Member Reese. Motion carried 5 to 0.

ARTICLE 4. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak to non-agenda items.

There was no one who wished to speak.

ARTICLE 5. Presentation on Grand Rapids Parks and Rec Items

The Parks and Rec Director, David Marquardt, was unable to attend, so this section will be rescheduled for a future meeting.

ARTICLE 6. Parks Master Plan Update

Member Reese, Rachel Walsh, and Planning Director Hilbrands met with Ada Township staff to discuss their newly implemented Parks Master Plan including parks, staffing, and programs. Ada Township's Master Plan had a heightened focus on integrating more maintenance staff for township services due to increase in part-time staff turnover. They are looking to hire more maintenance staff to work with the township and parks, and are looking for part-time staff to run the many programs they offer. Members stated that Ada has a large and active parks volunteer group.

Connecting Cascade Township's trails and greenways with Ada Township's was another topic of discussion. There was a focus on complementing the strengths of each other's parks i.e., Ada Township has a strong softball presence and Cascade could incorporate more pickleball and/or add a splash pad to one of the parks. Ada Township provides many programs that come with fees (with different prices for residents verses non-residents) that help pay the part-time staff running the programs and contribute to the upkeep cost of the parks. Supervisor Lesperance suggests improving the condition of Cascade Township fields and charging leagues a fee to rent them. Member Korstange thought that the Township should use a survey related to programming to figure out what the residents actually need/want; she really likes the idea of creating nature programs or classes geared toward younger children, which was agreed upon by other members.

Member Reese added that the next step in developing the Master Plan is creating an action plan that supports the Parks Committee's goals and objectives. In the report, there will be a list of action items as well as a spreadsheet for Parks Committee and Township Staff's use. Chair Wanty asked if he had a chance to talk with Staff yet and he responded that he had met with Planning Director Hilbrands, Manager Swayze, and Walsh to go over the preliminary goals and objectives.

ARTICLE 7. Property Acquisition Template

Chair Wanty asked members if they had tested the Draft Property Acquisition Template. The majority stated they had reviewed it but not applied it to specific properties. Member Engel suggested they consider this as a tacit of an endorsement of the template. There was no objection. Supervisor Lesperance read over the template and offered that it was obvious a lot of time and effort went into creating it.

Chair Wanty asked if there should be a scalable number when deciding to go forward with the purchase of new property. Member Engel and Supervisor Lesperance were in agreement that they did not like the idea of a cutoff point. Member Engel suggested the process include: each member individually evaluating the property against the template, discussion of those results at a Parks Committee meeting, and then providing a consensus recommendation to the Township Board, along with the reasoning behind their decision. Planning Director Hilbrands clarified that the Park's Committee's internal 'score' for the property would be the summed average of the committee members. After initial scoring was complete, there would be a discussion on how each member reached their score. That dialogue should help members align viewpoints and form a consensus.

Member Engel thought moving forward as a committee to approve this template was the best next step. Following that would be determining how to work with the board and create a policy utilizing the Property Acquisition Template.

Motion made by Supervisor Lesperance to approve the Parks Committee Property Acquisition Template. Supported by Member Engel. Motion carried 5 to 0.

Member Engel gave an update on the potential Thule property acquisition and suggested it may be a good fit for funds from the 'Grand River Greenway' project.

Supervisor Lesperance gave a brief update on the possible pedestrian bridge on Cascade Road over the Thornapple River. She and Manager Swayze met with the Road Commission and they provided descriptions of three possible alternatives. The Road Commission will provide more detailed plans in the future.

ARTICLE 8. Absence Policy

The committee discussed the current absence policy to decide if they should make any changes. The Current bylaws state, “If any member should have three consecutive absences from regularly scheduled meetings, or miss 50% of the meetings within a 12-month period, this should constitute reasonable grounds for removal.” To accommodate these rules, Chair Wanty suggested implementing the ability to join meetings virtually or creating a way for members to request a leave of absence. Overall, members gravitated toward creating provisions for a leave of absence. Creating regulations for virtual meetings wasn’t a viable reason at this time due to a need to standardize these regulations across all township recommendations committees. Member Engel stated that they need volunteers who are able and willing to attend meetings, and that it would be hard to determine what situations would qualify for a leave of absence. Another suggestion was the appointment of a member to act as an alternate.

Chair Wanty, Member Engel, and Member Reese will meet to draft a change to this portion of the Parks Committee bylaws. They also discussed Member Douglas and his recent absences and how they fit in with the current and future absence policies. It was ultimately decided that Member Douglas would be asked to step down but would be offered, potentially, a future open position on the Committee when he had more time available.

ARTICLE 9. Update and Announcements from Chair

There was a deer management meeting with Chair Wanty, Supervisor Lesperance, Manager Swayze, and Dr Rob Keys from Cornerstone University. Dr. Keys and his students will be conducting a deer study at Burton Park in the fall.

Chair Wanty spoke with Justin Heslinga, Conservation Director for the Land Conservancy of West Michigan, to discuss Burton Park’s absence of a healthy ecosystem when compared to Peace Park. Justin offered as key points the effects of deer eating the understory, the overabundance of invasive species, and the previous use of the property as a farm. Director Heslinga suggested the township develop a land management plan that could include a forest management plan and pick high priority areas of the park to concentrate resources and dollars.

Chair Wanty and Supervisor MacDonald met with a spongy moth consultant for more information. Many communities are not spraying in natural areas because the moth population peaks on its own after 2-3 years. The state introduced a fungus and a virus to facilitate reduction of the spongy moth population. Member Korstange noted that a late frost in the spring kills the fungus, making it ineffective. She also did not like the idea of spraying for spongy moths before it was an issue.

The church on the hill affiliates had asked about the plans for Wycliff; Chair Wanty will add Wycliff to the July agenda so the committee can figure out a process. The church is opening in mid-July and the people want more information on how the township will be utilizing the land.

Peace Park did not have any paper maps at the kiosk over the weekend and more need to be added.

Supervisor Lesperance gave an update on an unfinished, landlocked piece of property the township may be interested in acquiring. The property is approximately 10 acres and the price will be between \$5,800 and \$70,000. Land usage at this point is undetermined.

ARTICLE 10. Old Business

There was not any old business to discuss.

ARTICLE 11. Any Other Business

The was not any other business to discuss.

ARTICLE 12. Adjournment

Motion was made by Member Engel to adjourn. Supported by Member Korstange. Motion carried 5 to 0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Engel, Secretary