

Meeting Minutes

Cascade Charter Township
Parks Committee
Tuesday, May 17, 2022
8:00 AM
2870 Jacksmith Ave SE

ARTICLE 1. Chair Wanty called the meeting to order at 8:00 am.
Members Present: Chair Ginny Wanty, Joe Engel, Mike Reese, Windy Korstange,
Supervisor Grace Lesperance,
Members Absent: Matt Douglas (excused)

Others Present: Township Supervisor Ben Swayze, Planning Director Brian Hilbrands,
and Building and Grounds Supervisor Jim MacDonald and those listed on the sign in
sheet.

ARTICLE 2. 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 3. Approve the minutes of the April 19, 2022 meetings.

**Motion was made by Member Engel to approve the April 19, 2022 meeting minutes.
Supported by Member Korstange. 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. KDL Cascade Branch Library Plans and Update

Kent District Library Regional Manager Vanessa Walstra came to speak to the Parks
Committee about their outdoor gathering space plan for the Cascade branch. The plan
involves four phases which include natural and picnic areas, native plantings, and a
pavilion or amphitheater space. Funding for Phase One and Two would be paid for by
Friends of the Library

Member Engel said that the creation of a natural grass area would allow the Township
to perform one large cleanup in the fall rather than the current time spent mowing. The
proposed addition of a rain garden would be beneficial as there are currently drainage
concerns in the area of the property. Member Reese noted that a concern should be
making sure that the area is properly maintained.

ARTICLE 6. Updates from Manager

Manager Swayze explained that they completed the interview process for the Director
of Public Works position, but their chosen candidate did not accept the position. They
decided that their strongest candidate had an engineering background, and they should
be more focused on candidates with that skillset. They changed the position title to
'Township Engineer', increased the paygrade, and have posted the position again.

The resident(s) removing fallen trees from Burton Park appears to have stopped since the letter was sent to the surrounding area explaining that this activity could spread oak wilt. An anonymous message was sent in, apologizing for cutting down trees and the resident stated that said they would stop removing them.

Manager Swayze shared that regarding accessing one of the Oak Wilt sites, there is a small tree on the Patterson's property that will have to come down and the township will replace it. There was some confusion about which tree needed to be saved and which tree needed to come down. The township staff will need to look more into which tree is being referenced.

The township board established the Pathways Committee at their last meeting and Supervisor Lesperance is working to get the committee off the ground. They decided that drafting and approval of bylaws will be their first action. Mike Reese offered to serve as the Park Committee representative on the newly formed Pathway committee.

(Article 10 was moved toward the front of the meeting to include Manager Swayze)

ARTICLE 10. DTE Energy Tree Grant Program

DTE and Consumers Energy both have a tree planting grant that the township is looking into applying for. The grant is a one-for-one match of up to \$4,000 total for the year. The Consumers Energy grant is due by June 17th and Manager Swayze said he could complete the application. Supervisor MacDonald suggesting planting young, hardwood trees between Cascade Rec Park and highway to block noise.

ARTICLE 7. Update on Pathways and Trails

Executive Director of Kent Country Parks, Dan De Loeff, and John Morrison, Executive Director of West Michigan Trails & Greenways Coalition, met with Ginny, Grace, Brian and Ben to talk about the Grand River Greenway. They are connecting with all communities along Grand River to gauge interest in connecting them via pathways. Ottawa County already has acquired all of the land and funds to take the pathway from Grand Haven to Millennium Park. The State of Michigan has provided 55 million dollars to finish the pathway from Millennium Park to Lowell. They are just beginning to work out this project and it will be one for the Parks Committee to keep an eye on.

Bea Idema donated funds towards creating the Grand River trail (called Idema Explorer's trail). Bea Idema's heirs may be interested in contributing towards this new trail connection as well.

The biggest obstacle to the Grand River Greenway in Kent County is working with the railroad to see if they will allow a path along Grand River Drive and the railroad.

Member Korstange left the meeting at 8:52.

ARTICLE 8. Parks Master Plan Update

Member Reese stated that they will be setting up meetings with other neighboring communities to make sure everyone's plans, and initiatives worked well together.

The next meeting for the Parks Committee will be on May 31 from 7:30-9:00am to discuss goals and objectives for the Parks Master Plan.

The Parks Committee does not currently have a process for converting the land they purchase into a useful park property. The Parks committee decided to use the undeveloped land at Wycliff to create a process they would be able to use for future properties. Members Wanty, Engel and Reese have been working on the property acquisition checklist side of the project, so the township knows if a piece of land is worth purchasing for the township but, had not yet tackled the development end of the project. Member Engel suggested looking into what amenities citizens are interested in and going from there. They proposed a community planning session, a roundtable discussion, and a discussion at the Parks Committee level including staff from Wycliff Church and some of the park's neighbors to talk things through. They also considered hiring a landscape engineer or planner to get some design ideas.

ARTICLE 9. Property Acquisition Template

Member Engel said the committee looked at property acquisition templates from many different localities and used the best parts to make one that fit Cascade Township's needs. They worked to balance the different types of properties the township may be interested in. This would give them metrics for evaluation as well as lend legitimacy to the Parks Committee's property acquisition recommendations. The Parks Committee is working to get the template in front of the township board this summer. Chair Wanty encouraged members to test the template out on a Cascade Township Park.

ARTICLE 11. Updates and Announcements from Chair

Chair Wanty has set up a meeting in June with Dr. Rob Keys about completing a deer management survey for Burton Park. The survey will start in the winter and decisions will be made based on the results.

Member Engel will be leading a hike at Peace Park for the land conservancy. Twelve people signed up to participate as of a week ago and often more attend that sign up.

Member Engel, Chair Wanty, Supervisor MacDonald, and some of the township's maintenance department employees will be hiking with Nick Sanchez and Mike Maceachron from the Kent Conservation District at Burton Park and Peace Park to look at tree health, specifically oak wilt. Someone reported that there may be oak wilt at Peace Park. The site will be checked by the foresters.

Eleven volunteers showed up for the garlic mustard pull at Peace Park and four helped at the cemetery garlic mustard pull. Chair Wanty will be knocking on some doors on 30th St, near the cemetery, to see if they will let her pull the garlic mustard in their yards, as that is where it is migrating to the cemetery from. There will be a workday with GE Aviation on Friday to remove invasive bittersweet at Burton Park.

ARTICLE 12. Strategic Plan Update

There was not a strategic plan update at this time.

ARTICLE 13. Port-a-Potty Request Near Pickleball Courts

The committee talked about a porta potty for near the pickleball court at Cascade Rec Park in January due to a citizen request. At that time, Manager Swayze said that the township orders porta potties in the spring and they will add an additional porta potty to that order to be placed near the pickleball courts, on a trial basis. Chair Wanty said she spoke with employees at Kent County Parks, Ada Parks, and Kentwood Parks and they don't put in a porta potty if the site has a usable bathroom. Supervisor MacDonald said he is currently looking for a level spot that the company can back their truck into to deposit the porta potty. There is concern that this will spark the desire for more porta potties in other areas of Cascade Rec Park when what they really need is a permanent bathroom. Supervisor MacDonald said a permanent bathroom would be possible once the old maintenance building at the Rec Park is removed. He thought the best course of action would be to take down the current building and build two single stall unisex bathrooms. The committee will work on coming up with Pickleball rules and compare them to other local municipalities. They may utilize one of the courts as a 'challenge court' to help keep the peace and give anyone who would like to play a turn.

ARTICLE 14. Old Business

There was not any old business to discuss.

ARTICLE 15. Any Other Business

Trees at Cascade Rec Park: There was more discussion on planting trees between the walking path and the property line near the highway at Cascade Rec Park.

ARTICLE 16. Adjournment

Motion was made by Member Engel to adjourn. Supported by Supervisor Lesperance. Motion carried 4 to 0. The Meeting adjourned at 9:51 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Engel, Secretary