

Minutes

Cascade Charter Township
Parks Committee
Tuesday, July 19, 2022
8:00 A.M.
5920 Tahoe Dr. SE

ARTICLE 1. Chair Wanty called the meeting to order at 8:02 A.M.
Members Present: Chair Ginny Wanty, Joe Engel, Mike Reese, Windy Korstange,
Supervisor Grace Lesperance
Members Absent: None

Others Present: Planning Director Hilbrands, Zoning Administrator Madison Smith-Jacoby, 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 Korstange to approve the current agenda. Supported by Member Engel. Motion carried 5 to 0.

ARTICLE 3. Approve the Minutes of the June 21, 2022 Meeting

Member Engel stated in Article 7 the word “task” should be changed to “tacit”.

Motion was made by Member Engel to amend and approve the June 21, 2022 meeting minutes. Supported by Supervisor Lesperance. Motion carried 5 to 0.

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

There was no one who wished to speak.

ARTICLE 5. Property Acquisition Next Steps, Wycliff Property

Planning Director Hilbrands created a memorandum describing the process for determining the potential uses, amenities, and improvements on newly acquired park properties. Other Townships have utilized grants, such as the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund Grant, as a measure to pay for improvements and amenities.

Member Engel suggested converting the memo to a formal, post-acquisition development process template. Member Korstange agreed and stated this process should be presented to the Township Board with clear policy guidelines. This should be completely transparent and reflect how the property was acquired and along with any subsequent development recommendations. The budget and park naming process should also be included in the development template.

Member Engel questioned the extent to which the new property development template should include details of the committee’s acquisition discussions as part of its presentation to the Township Board.

All members agreed there needs to be a more concise process created before approval. Further discussions will help formalize the property acquisition and development processes and templates.

With respect to the Wycliffe property, Chair Wanty recently noticed invasive Tree-of-Heaven at both the township and church properties. Since this is a colonial tree species with a connected root system, solutions are limited as you cannot simply cut down trees and grind the stump. Kent Conservation District has agreed to assist with removal of this species from the new park. Once removed, there will be a better opportunity to decide on specific amenities, including trails or pathways. There was hesitation in initiating any type of construction in the area because invasive species thrive on disturbance, so even moving dirt around creates more issues.

Chair Wanty suggested having Troyer Group amend their contract for the parks master plan update so the committee had time to determine amenities for Wycliff. Members agree that having an amendment will help ensure that the plan fits the requirements. Because of a potential conflict for member Reese, those associated with Troyer Group were asked to step out of the meeting for this discussion.

Member Reese and Rachel Walsh with Troyer Group exited the meeting.

Planning Director Hilbrands explained many of the proposals received for the parks master plan update included add-ons for master planning specific park properties, so creating an amended contract is not an atypical request. Member Engel agreed but had reservations about the appearance of a potential conflict with Member Reese being both a member of the committee and a principal with Troyer Group.

Supervisor Lesperance suggested clarifying what Troyer Group will be working on and it was collectively decided they would incorporate only additional work on the Wycliff property. Park Committee members wanted to wait before asking Troyer Group to include additional parks in the Master Plan process.

Motion was made by Supervisor Lesperance to expand/amend the agreement with Troyer group for further discussion and development of the Wycliff property. Supported by Chair Wanty. Motion carried 4 to 0.

Member Korstange left at 8:45 A.M.

Member Reese and Rachel Walsh with Troyer Group re-entered the meeting.

Planning Director Hilbrands informed those previously excused that amending the contract includes working with the Parks Committee on expanding the development of the Wycliff property. In the first step, the Parks Committee must be consulted to determine what amenities are needed. Once amenities are determined, they can begin the development of a plan(s) specific to the Wycliff property.

Member Reese asked if the committee would want this property included in the 5-year plan since it was acquired amid plan creation. Planning Director Hilbrands said yes since

the property has been acquired. The next steps will be discussed further as a committee to certify that everything is in order.

Member Engel added that the cost is generally understood, but he wanted to ensure Troyer Group includes any cost additions in the plan. There are various ways to figure out costs such as determining a scope, tracking hourly, or setting a limit on the budget.

ARTICLE 6. Update Bylaws

Member Engel stated the updated bylaws were ready for review and was hopeful they could be approved at the August meeting and sent to the Township Board. Engel again noted that the updated bylaws will need to be reviewed by legal counsel. Updates discussed were highlighted by the increase in size to 7 members and removal of ad hoc members.

ARTICLE 7. Resignation of Parks Committee Member

Chair Wanty received a letter of resignation from Member Matt Douglas.

Motion made by Supervisor Lesperance to accept the resignation of Matt Douglas. Supported by Member Engel. Motion carried 4 to 0.

Chair Wanty stated there is an application process for people wishing to join the committee.

Supervisor Lesperance stated that potential applicants will be brought to current committee members for consideration and thereafter must be approved by the Township Board. She also suggested including some members that are already on other township committees to create integration. In addition, there needs to be a focus on recreation in parks, diversity among members, and ensuring more representation east of the river. Chair Wanty suggested incorporating a section in the fall newsletter explaining the open positions.

ARTICLE 8. Parks Master Plan Update and Creating a Parks Mission

Member Reese gave a brief update. Progress has been made on the plan itself. Among the main things left are the action item plan (steps taken throughout the 5-year plan to achieve goals/objectives) and a mission statement creation. Member Engel asked if the township had a mission statement for the strategic plan since he felt they should be aligned.

Members agreed the description of the Park Committee on the Township website needs to be taken down and revised.

Motion was made by Supervisor Lesperance to remove the text of the Parks description on the Cascade Township website. Supported by Chair Wanty. Motion carried 4 to 0.

Member Reese noted we would benefit from a meeting to discuss the action plan and mission statement and agreed to help facilitate scheduling.

ARTICLE 9. Pathways Committee

This committee is still formulating a time to meet and has yet to elect a Chair. Consistent with a previous discussion on the potential of having a joint meeting for trails and parks in Ada, members agreed it would be a good idea to meet with Ada to see where their priorities aligned. Member Reese also plans to attend one of Ada's Parks meetings to share the completed master plan.

ARTICLE 10. Updates and Announcements from Chair

Supervisor Lesperance was asked if she found any volunteers to help with the parks. Among the people she talked to, one was associated with the Eagle Scouts and they are interested in helping. Volunteer management is lacking. There are plenty of people willing to help, but no one to organize groups or projects.

Chair Wanty was working on newsletter articles for Fall which was due August 1st and the E-News article due July 25th.

Member Engel would like to include an article on the impact of fertilizers and lack of buffering on the water supply and the Thornapple River, noting that many people are unaware of the negative impact.

Chair Wanty will begin providing quarterly reports on Parks Committee activities for the Board of Trustees. She is looking for topics to include.

Dr. Dave Warners is scheduled to present about the Calvin University Plaster Creek Stewards program at the August meeting. (Plaster Creek is one of the 3 watersheds in Cascade Township.)

ARTICLE 11. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

ARTICLE 12. Any Other Business

There was not any other business to discuss.

ARTICLE 13. Adjournment

Motion was made by Member Engel to adjourn the meeting. Supported by Supervisor Lesperance. Motion carried 4 to 0. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Engel, Secretary