

THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE

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CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING


MEETING DATES: Tuesday, June 24, 2014

TIME OF MEETINGS: 5:30 P.M.

PLACE OF MEETINGS: Commerce Township Hall
2009 Township Drive
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

- PURPOSE OF MEETINGS:**
1. Review Concept Ideas for Wise Rd Property
 2. League and Community Service Organization Report
 3. Parks and Recreation Department Report
 4. Township Board Report
 5. Revenue & Expenditure Report
 6. Other Matters

SIGNATURE OF TOWNSHIP CLERK


Vanessa Magner, CMMC
Clerk, Charter Township of Commerce

DATE AND TIME OF POSTING: Thursday, June 19, 2014 at 10:30 am

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**FINAL
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE ****SPECIAL**** MEETING**

Tuesday, June 24, 2014

2009 Township Drive
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Wichert called the special meeting to order at 5:30 pm at the Township Offices.

ROLL CALL: Present: Tim Wichert, Chairperson
Peter Pace, Vice Chairperson
Michelle Holmes, Secretary
William Petsch
Bob Berkheiser
Jennifer Hansen
Barbara Garbutt

Also Present: Emily England, Director of Senior Services/Parks and Recreation
Leah Groya, Planning Consultant, Living Lab
Jamison Brown, Planning Consultant, Living Lab

COMMUNICATIONS:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Russ Lafevre, 2032 Kratage Court, Commerce Township, greeted the Commissioners.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

None

ITEM 1: REVIEW CONCEPT IDEAS FOR WISE ROAD PROPERTY

Ms. Groya introduced the Wise Road Property Concept Ideas. She explained that she and Mr. Brown had put together a handful of slides to walk the Committee through the process thus far. For those who were at the public workshop at the end of April, they may have seen some of these already. She would review them briefly as a refresher, review the history of the property, and then the site analysis would be addressed.

Mr. Brown would then present the stakeholder input results, and the schematics and concept plan that was developed as a result of the feedback.

Ms. Groya delivered her portion of the presentation and reviewed the following items with the Committee:

- The Wise Road concept plan was identified as a priority in the master plan process that was adopted earlier this year.
- A site walk and analysis of the existing conditions was conducted.
- Meetings have been held with the stakeholder groups.
- Design workshops were held and development of the concept plan has begun.
- Cost estimating and phasing has been reviewed preliminarily.

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- The Wise Road Park is located at the northeast portion of Wise Road and Carroll lake Road and consists of 518 acres. Wise Road bisects the middle of the property.
- A historical review was conducted between the 1800s to the present day. Historical maps were provided and the following items were addressed as the timeline was discussed.
 - The historical vegetation patterns included black oak barrens and mixed conifers along the creeks.
 - The local tributaries were reviewed. The diversion of the Huron River, which supplied water to the Commerce Mill in the early days, was discussed.
 - The impoundment and lake were indicated. The dam failed around 1940 and that was drained. There are still remnants of the old dam on the site.
 - Changes in the property ownership ranged from being publicly owned by the Department of Conservation, to the southern portion becoming the Nike Missile site from 1955-1974 when it was then deactivated. Aerial views were presented. The property then had various uses ranging from a day camp for children to Michigan Works. The Township then purchased the property in 2011. Remaining structures were demolished as part of the purchase agreement and the site was zoned public recreation district.
 - In the Township's purchase agreement, deed restrictions apply and the language outlines the permissible and non-permissible uses. Generally speaking, the majority of the 518 acres is dedicated to open space and outdoor recreational uses. Active or more intense outdoor uses are limited to the 74 acre parcel which is the envelope to the south side of Wise Road.
 - All of this information was communicated to the stakeholders and public and they were notified of the important role they have in how the concept plan is to be developed.
 - In 2006 an extensive eco-assessment was completed for the property. This details the significant natural features showing that the site is great for recreational opportunities, including access to surface water, the historical aspects and the cultural resources. This information has been used as a basis of understanding in moving forward with the concept plan.
 - The site walk-through of the property was conducted in April 2014 with several members of the Township and other groups present. The walk-through took approximately 5 hours. Photos were taken and this gave a good understanding of the types of environments within the park, along with what might be opened up more and what should be protected as well.
 - The impoundment area on the south side is peaceful and remnants of an old structure can be seen. This area may be good for fishing.
 - The north side of the property has an extensive trail system that meanders through the different wetland areas. Some visitors have created crude makeshift crossings in the wetlands and they have already been using the area informally as a park.
 - Also on the north side, a BMX bike course has been hand-built by neighborhood children. They put in an extensive amount of work.

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- There are great views all around the park, especially from the northwest portion of the property elevations.
- Jamie will now walk you through the input that was received in the stakeholder sessions and then move into the concept plan ideas.

Mr. Brown began his presentation and shared the following with the Committee:

- We had a good turnout for the design workshop. There were several targeted meetings that were well attended including the site walk.
- A long list of potential activities was provided for the participants and they ranked them in order to prioritize those that they would like to see included in the concept plan. The priorities / activities listed for the groups to choose from were as follows:
 - Dog Park/Walking
 - Running/Biking Trails
 - Leave Open Space
 - Ball Diamonds
 - Dog Freedom
 - Soccer Fields
 - Fishing
 - Kayaking/Canoeing
 - Spray Park
 - Pickleball
- Each group in the workshops were encouraged to develop their own concept plans. (Slides were presented depicting the suggested concept plans and each schematic was reviewed at length.)
- In most cases, the property is constrained by the deed restrictions and this was communicated to the participants. The programmed areas for intensive uses are within the 74 acres, and there is still 435 acres of trails and open space.
- Most of the participants would like to see the park kept natural. Additional suggestions included a nature center and disc golf.
- Tables were presented showing connectivity, trails and roadways. Most of the activities in the 74 acres will run along the Wise Road frontage. An internal road was suggested.
- The idea of camping was also a prominent feature discussed, combined with a sports park component.
- The feedback received was then blended with the best of the elements, considering the topography, access, views, natural features and overlay to begin the concept plan to properly develop the new park.
- This schematic includes the major elements of the plan. The northern piece, north of Wise Road, would be completely devoted to trails with two trailheads and connection of the park into the neighborhood. Due to the informal activities that have been taking place on the site, we felt that formalizing the park entry on the north side was important in gaining ownership of the park. The neighborhood access and their view of the park may also help to discourage unsanctioned activities and developments.
- The primary idea for the trails is that there would be an outer loop which would be paved asphalt. This would be multiuse and would then connect to the smaller

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loops that would be limestone or woodchip pathways providing access to the creeks and wetlands.

Mr. Wichert inquired about bridges. Ms. Groya replied that 7 bridges are proposed in the concept. Mr. Brown added that there would be a total of 690 linear feet of bridges, a fishing pier and boardwalks throughout the entire park to improve access. He elaborated on these and the related programming opportunities for various groups to walk through the wetlands.

Mr. Brown continued his review:

- Wise Road is a high speed road that cuts the park in two, therefore it does not have the sense of one contiguous parcel. We have been brainstorming a way to reconfigure Wise Road to create an entrance point and a parkway or boulevard with pedestrian amenities, akin to the Martin Parkway cross section. This could make it feel as if you were driving through the park as opposed to the existing high-speed barrier that is dangerous to cross. Significant improvements will be necessary to improve safety.
- On the south side where the more intense action would take place, the parking lot and soccer fields are shown. Adjacent to that is a playground and a splash pad, along with an area for court games. Another play area is also open; it is not dedicated or programmed and this would allow a public area to play Frisbee, fly kites, et cetera.
- Next to that would be the dog park which was paired down somewhat in the design, but this could potentially occupy more acreage than what is suggested here as there is a lot of land available. That can be further addressed and modified in the deeper design phases.

Mr. Berkheiser inquired about the deed restrictions and asked why the dog park would have to be included in the 74 acres. He understood that the high-intensity recreational activities would be restricted to this area, but he wasn't sure why the dog park could not be located within the 435 acres remaining on the property, such as on the other side by the fishing pond or along Carroll Lake Road. Mr. Brown explained that the dog park would allow a contained "leash-off" area for dogs and the infrastructure would accommodate that. Ms. Holmes discussed land clearing that would be necessary for the dog park and the related restrictions. Ms. England agreed and added that the trees cannot be disturbed in other areas of the park. Oakland County had wanted to build the dog park elsewhere but it could only be located on the south section for these reasons. Open discussions continued regarding the deed restrictions, the dog park location, amenities, accessibility, the "leash-off" policy and regulating activities.

Mr. Brown continued his review:

- Whether the leash-off policy will be permitted is an item that will need to be tackled, but the suggested location of the dog park provides access to the regional area with convenient access to parking, restrooms, facilities, and it is adjacent to the camping area.
- The other side of the park shares facilities, the picnic shelter, restrooms and parking between the family playground and the soccer component.

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- The area alongside the dog park is a great place for campouts and scouting. There is a cool island adjacent to the impoundment and this is separated by a manmade canal. The impoundment creek presents a good opportunity for small scale kayaking through the park. This area has a feel of being back in the country. Again, this accesses the common area for the restrooms and shelter area next to the dog park. Group camping and individual campsite areas are proposed, allowing for a cluster of approximately 10 tents in one open field area with a common fire pit, with the other sites being more independent. Bus parking would be available to accommodate group camping or programming activities.
- This is the general concept based upon the synthesis of the input received from the various groups that participated, and the layout was created logically from the reality of a construction standpoint in consideration of the topography.

Mr. Pace asked how many acres the dog park would be. Mr. Brown replied that it would be about 10 acres, and there is room to grow. Mr. Wichert asked if it would be cut into two sections for large and small dogs. Mr. Brown confirmed and explained that it is difficult to show all of the detail since the park is so large. The details in each zone include the dog park division, trails, bridges, boardwalks and a fishing pier off the trail system.

Mr. Brown reviewed the soccer zone where 8 fields had been identified along with parking, amenities, trails and shade structures. The initial suggestion is for 7 natural fields with the 8th being artificial turf which has no rotation issues. These fields would potentially have lighting and bleachers. Open discussions began as Chris Haney communicated between the Committee, Mr. Brown and Ms. Groya regarding CW3's needs in relation to the soccer complex. Mr. Haney discussed the ratio of balance to field rotations and how the artificial turf allows for flexibility. Lengthy discussions continued in relation to the soccer complex at Wise, the Dodge park soccer fields that would likely remain, the potential for more fields at Wise to accommodate growth in the CW3 league, the possibility of more artificial turf fields and the who might bear the costs for creating more artificial turf if necessary, and seeding and irrigation of the natural fields.

Mr. Russ Lafevre, 2032 Kratage Court, inquired about parking. Mr. Brown reviewed the parking lots for each area that were created in accordance with the standards for recreational zoning which includes roughly 400 spaces proposed.

Mr. Brown concluded his review, discussing the proposal in further detail including the shared amenities, recreational opportunities and the addition of water and sewer to the site which would be a big ticket item. He addressed the need to implement phasing in a cost-effective manner.

Committee Comments:

Ms. Garbutt stated that she feels the Township should do its very best to accommodate the sports groups as has been done in the past for baseball, football and other sports. She also feels there is a need to accommodate people who are interested in other outdoor activities besides sports as most parks tend to be sports complexes. She does

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not want the other groups to be forgotten.

Ms. Holmes stated that this may be overbuilding of the area as this park is for open space. Mr. Berkheiser stated that this is only a small piece of the property along Wise Road. He does not disagree with Barb's comments, but this development is only 74 acres out of 518 total. The trails are all along the north side and 435 acres will be open space. Mr. Brown added that the soccer fields would be occupying 20 of the 518 acres. Ms. Holmes wanted to see everything in balance.

Open discussions ensued regarding uses at other parks and potential uses at Wise Road including sports fields, adult leagues, tennis courts, volleyball and pickleball. Maintenance of the fields and courts were addressed. The conversations segued into how safety of a park improves when there is high usage and activity, as with sports events. When the park is used and maintained for sports purposes, the other areas of the park are also used more frequently and this tends to keep the riffraff out and keeps issues to a minimum.

Mr. Meenahan asked if there would be an equestrian component at Wise Road and he wondered if the community had expressed this interest. Ms. Groya replied no. Mr. Berkheiser stated that there is an equestrian area off of Wixom Road at Proud Lake. Mr. Meenahan also inquired about potentially refurbishing the dam to expand the lake area at Wise Road. Mr. Wichert replied that this had also been mentioned in an earlier discussion. Ms. Groya explained that the state has a lot of funding available for removing dams; however, there are no funds available for putting them in. In addition, the environmental impact of damming water is negative and a permit may not even be granted. Mr. Brown stated that he could look into this further.

Mr. Pace complimented Leah and Jamie on a job well done. He sees that there has been a lot of compromising. He agrees with Barb and feels this is a fair compromise of what can be provided for everyone. Although the plan may be missing a few things, those can be added along the way. It may be possible for CW3 to have 9 fields with at least one being artificial turf to accommodate their needs. He does not see the fields at Dodge park being removed. He also expressed a need to publicize the kayaking and camping with appropriate signage.

Mr. Wichert asked if Wise Road would become the property of the Township. Ms. Groya replied no, it is a County road. Mr. Brown explained that the plan could be forwarded to the County and adapted accordingly when future developments take place on the roadway. This could include sidewalks and other improvements at that time to coincide with their timeline for roadwork. Grant applications could also be sought in this regard. Ms. Groya added that it is currently a scary situation if you are trying to cross Wise Road in this area as a pedestrian.

Mr. Brown explained that this is a concept plan that would be adopted by the Committee and Township. As with Maple Glen, there will be lots of design revisions as things progress. This is a vision for the park and he feels it is exemplary of the input received from the community. It is respectful of the natural features and it embraces the

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opportunities presented on the south portion where the site is already disturbed, while maintaining over 400 acres of open space for nothing but trails. Ms. Groya agreed and encouraged the Committee members to walk the north side of the property if they had not already.

Mr. Lafevre stated that the outer loop as presented would offer great access for the handicapped and elderly. As it exists currently, it is a pretty rough area. Mr. Brown added that there would potentially be about 8 miles of paved trails within the loops, and of course so many more miles of trails that are unpaved. Mr. Lafevre asked how the ruffraff would be kept out. Mr. Berkheiser replied that the adjacent neighbors help with that task. Mr. Brown added that although the property is owned by the Township, it has not yet been programmed or maintained. Once these programmed activities are implemented, that kind of unsanctioned activity wouldn't be as commonplace.

Open discussions took place regarding the concept plan as it relates to the goals of the master plan and what is needed in the community. Mr. Berkheiser discussed the online surveys that were part of the master planning process. Ms. England and Ms. Groya reviewed the feedback they had received via the surveys, emails and other methods. Ms. Groya discussed the environmental resource perspectives and she felt that soccer fields for example would be a much better fit at Wise Road as compared to Maple Glen. Ms. England added that she felt this proposed concept plan for Wise Road captured everything from all of the meetings, including the visioning session and the walk through. The plan is balanced and accommodates the needs and wants of the community and she is in favor.

Ms. Holmes discussed the potential new location of the Library in Dodge Park and addressed the possibility of a nature center to accommodate the outdoor education piece. She inquired about also accommodating these needs at the Wise Road property. Mr. Brown explained that a nature center was mentioned frequently in the overall planning; however, in other communities he has seen the municipalities struggle with programming, staffing and keeping a nature center building running. Mr. Pace agreed that it could be high-cost. Mr. Brown explained his vision for a more do-it-yourself type of outdoor interpretive nature center. Between the extensive national pathway system, the camping, the outdoor staging areas and bus parking, programming could be provided for outdoor classrooms and self-guided tours. The Committee held open discussions regarding organized events and a nature center building versus the suggested outdoor interpretive nature center staging areas. The camping would be a fee-based activity, school groups could be coordinated, and weekly guided tours could even be offered which could be conducted by volunteers or paid individuals/naturalists. The trailhead could offer signage and a map of the trail systems to serve as a starting point for those groups, and they could go from there depending upon their topic for the day. These types of opportunities could be publicized. Ms. Holmes stressed that she wanted to make sure that groups involved in nature center activities, whatever they may entail, would not be competing with the leagues for space and time within the parks. Ms. Groya felt that the north side of the Wise property would offer serenity and seclusion, away from the south side where the soccer fields are to be located. Mr. Pace agreed and felt that this was well divided.

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Mr. Meenahan inquired about the next steps and the timeline. Mr. Brown explained that the estimated \$12 to \$13 million park concept is about a 20-year timeline. This would be prioritized through the master planning process. Budgeting needs to take place and the future vision will change accordingly over time. Ms. Groya further explained the process, including refining the concept plan based upon the direction of the Committee, refining cost estimates and developing the final phasing plans. The final deliverables will be taken to the Township Board. She asked if the Committee would like to see the modified concept plan with the priorities for moving forward, or if the final could be presented to the Board in July. Mr. Berkheiser stated that he would really like to think over the concept more, take time to look at it in depth and tune it up within the next week or so. Ms. England asked if the item should be brought back before the Committee again before it goes to the Township Board. Mr. Berkheiser replied yes. Mr. Pace agreed that he would like one more shot at finalizing it before it goes to the Board. Mr. Wichert also agreed.

Mr. Brown and Ms. Groya would forward the PowerPoint PDF files along with a large scale plot to the Committee members to allow them to further explore the plans and zoom in on the details. The Committee would communicate ideas and suggestions through email with Ms. England and Living Lab.

ITEM 2: LEAGUE AND COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATION REPORT

Soccer – CW3, Chris Haney

Mr. Haney discussed the following with the Committee.

- Our tryouts were held two weeks ago at Dodge and everything went very well.
- Thank you to Peter for bailing us out Saturday morning. We had an electrical issue at the pavilion with a GFI outlet and Peter replaced it.
- Our extra amenities are working out well.
- On Wednesday evenings we have a drop-in soccer program for kids from 6 to 14 years old. We don't do any coaching, we just let them play freely for an hour and a half.
- The west field has been used hard and needs some rest at this time. With the recent weather conditions, it is not recovering well.
- The east field looks good and all activities are being held there for now.
- We will be starting group activities toward the end of July and I will provide dates to Emily soon.
- The extra trash cans we recently borrowed from the Richardson Center should have been returned by now.

Ms. England stated that they had been returned.

Friends of Byers – Jim Meenahan, Karen Schantz, Cheryl Quinn

Mr. Meenahan inquired about the progress for the engineering and architectural assessments for the barn and farmhouse. Ms. England stated that the project is out for bids so that three bids can be obtained and presented to the Board. These should be available for review at the July Board meeting. One bid has already been obtained and meetings are arranged for the others.

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Mr. Meenahan discussed the following with the Committee:

- The first Wine Tasting event will be Saturday, June 28th.
- It's been a little difficult planning this for the first time but things are working out very nicely.
- Colasanti's Market is our main sponsor, and we have six other restaurants in the area donating food. Some of them will even be present at the event to serve food.
- There will be live music.
- The area will be fenced off and under the tent which is 40x40.
- We have sold 73 tickets.

Mr. Berkheiser and Ms. England discussed the Byers pavilion project. Ms. England stated that Tom Zoner has been working with Dr. Barry.

No representatives were present at the meeting for the following leagues:

- **Lakes Athletics**
- **Commerce Little League**
- **Lakes Area Hawks**
- **Michigan Mountain Bike Association**
- **Interlakes Girls Softball**

ITEM 3: PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT REPORT

Ms. England shared the following with the Committee:

- The Arthritis Foundation is holding free Tai Chi exercise classes on Monday and Friday afternoons, and Line Dancing lessons on Friday mornings.
- The tree surgeon should have the site analysis available for the July meeting.
- We are beginning to discuss the budget.
- Peter can provide an update of the Concert and Movie in the Park.

Mr. Pace discussed the following with the Committee:

- The Concert was a soggy day at the park.
 - We gave it a shot in our raincoats and ponchos.
 - The band played 30 minutes and then canceled as the rain came down.
 - We received a credit for the moonbounce.
 - We did not lose anything financially.
 - The kids did get involved in the archery activities that were available.
 - The sound system was great even with the tarp on it so we look forward to hearing it uncovered at the next event on July 11th.
- The Movie in the Park was *Frozen*.
 - The turnout was excellent with 250 people.
 - It was a beautiful day. It was so bright we couldn't start the movie until 9:25pm.
 - We will look into negotiating a larger screen next time and possibly raising it up to provide for better viewing.
 - The next Movie in the Park is on July 19th and *Dolphin Tale* will be featured.

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Ms. England stated that July 19th is also the Art-on-the-River event.

ITEM 4: TOWNSHIP BOARD REPORT

Mr. Berkheiser provided the following:

- I don't have a lot to report.
- We spent a lot of time discussing a possible position within the Township.

ITEM 5: REVENUE & EXPENDITURE REPORT

Ms. England had received the report and would be forwarding it to the Committee for review.

ITEM 6: OTHER MATTERS


- Mr. Pace and Ms. England discussed the status of the Dodge Park pavilion Eagle Scout project. Mr. Berkheiser also inquired about assurances that construction would be sound. Mr. Pace explained that the building department issues the permits and oversees construction. Ms. England would be following up with Nathan and Maurice Cox.
- Ms. England discussed the potential dog park at Wise Road Park and discussions with Oakland County regarding the possibility of their involvement with the project. Open discussions continued regarding the property deed restrictions and the areas considered for the dog park. Ms. England will obtain a legal opinion in this regard.
- Ms. England discussed park signs and the delays that had been encountered.

The next Parks and Recreation Meeting will be Monday, July 28, 2014 at 7:00pm. after visiting Dodge Park.

ITEM 12: ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Pace, supported by Petsch, to adjourn the meeting at 7:07pm.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY



Michelle Holmes, Secretary