FINAL
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE *SPECIAL* MEETING
Monday, August 3, 2026
2009 Township Drive
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Petsch called the meeting to order at 5:59pm at the Richardson Center.

ROLL CALL: **Present**: William Petsch, Chairperson
Johnny Walker, Vice Chairperson
Bob Berkheiser (exited 6:39pm)
Denise Vecellio
Mark Giromini

Absent: Krystal Schwartz, Secretary (excused)
Ron Krueger (excused)

Also Present: Emily England, Director of Senior Services/Parks & Recreation
Allison Kennedy, Asst. to Parks & Recreation Director
~~Steve Vercellino, Maintenance Director~~

ITEM 1. BUDGET DISCUSSION
Chairperson Petsch – Do you want to go right down the list here?

Director England – Yes.

Mr. Berkheiser – I want to just remind everybody, like we're supposed to do, and I'm not saying you did or didn't, but part of the Board's expectation of our involvement in our parks is that you've got individual parks and we should be looking at it for what we can do to upgrade, or whatever you think might need to be done, and of course, reach out to Allison with that. Keep that in mind as you're going through parks on a monthly basis so that as we do this, we keep up with whatever we want to do to expand the individual parks.

Director England – All right, so then we'll go down the list, Victory Park.

Mr. Berkheiser – So, since I have to leave can we start in reverse order?

Director England – We can do whatever you want.

Mr. Berkheiser – All right, let's do Bicentennial and work our way up.

1. **BICENTENNIAL PARK**

Chairperson Petsch – With all the work we've done, Bicentennial is in pretty good shape. In the back corner by the subdivision, I think we could do something in there, maybe a gazebo or a picnic area. Other than that, we have been working on the baseball field.

Director England – The baseball field is going to have to get moved. I might as well break the news to you now. They budgeted for the new maintenance garage and where it has to go, it will be partly on the asphalt area behind the current garage, but it is going to extend out into the park, so it's going to take the outfield. So, we would need to locate it, which isn't a big deal since there really is not much there.

Chairperson Petsch – I was going to say that we've been battling that to get it killed off, then we had issues with pesticides and weed killer. We tried to talk to Mark Rousseaux and they don't want to do it because of possible issues with RoundUp and the different contaminants on the ground. So, it would pretty much have to be machined to be turned over and graded, which was more than I thought we needed to spend because that would have gotten quite costly to build a diamond that isn't really used besides recreation.

Mr. Berkheiser – What is the goal of that ball field?

Chairperson Petsch – There is a demand for ball fields, and the goal was, because that park is used so much now, with the pickleball, basketball, and volleyball, that a ballpark in that area for the neighborhood would be again a place to have them recreate on the weekends or whenever. There's so much more use of that park now and it would be an enhancement to it.

Director England – Lakes mentioned they wanted to put a wiffle ball diamond in at Hickory Glen, but there's really not room for it there. Is that something we could put in at Bicentennial?

Chairperson Petsch – Yes.

Director England – I think wiffle ball is more backyard family fun.

Chairperson Petsch – Yes, that's great. I don't know what's involved. I've seen it on TV, but that's usually indoors. And there were a few outdoors, but it's not that big of an area for it.

Director England – I just think that might be a better fit than a baseball diamond.

Chairperson Petsch – Yes, we could do that backing up to the corner, going this way from the pavilion and the volleyball court. Let's put that in.

Ms. Kennedy – You might not get the same support from Lakes. Their whole point of it over there was that kids could play while their siblings are playing a game.

Director England – Sure, and that's not to say they can't put one there if it can fit, but with this being a neighborhood park, it's so busy, and I think all ages would go and play it.

Chairperson Petsch – Yes, so we could put in what they consider a regulation wiffle ball diamond. Those are the two things. I don't know of any more to consider with the practice soccer field out there.

Director England – They don't use it.

Chairperson Petsch – Yes, I know.

Mr. Berkheiser – How far out is the maintenance building going to go?

Director England – The building comes to about right here, but then they have to have a drive so they can pull out and around.

Mr. Berkheiser – This is the ball field here?

Director England – Yes.

Discussion continued regarding the soccer field, the ball field and the maintenance building as the Committee reviewed the aerial map.

Mr. Berkheiser – What if you spin the field the other direction?

Director England – That would be better.

Chairperson Petsch – We have to get the dimensions and sketch it out.

Ms. Kennedy – We can get the dimensions.

Mr. Berkheiser – There are some trees in there, and that's where the pavilion is.

Chairperson Petsch – I was pulling it off the table to consider the cost.

Director England – I'll get a price for it and then I can send out the actual budget numbers.

Chairperson Petsch – So, I'm thinking we're probably going to have to up that budget if we do a gazebo back there, if it works into that back corner.

Ms. Kennedy – You're wanting the gazebo in the northeast corner, closer to the subdivision, between the playground and the subdivision?

Chairperson Petsch – Yes, a picnic area there with some shelter. There's nothing in that whole area for shelter besides the original…

Mr. Berkheiser – There are trees there. I would almost say you want to put it here, away from the pickleball area.

Chairperson Petsch – Yes.

Director England – So for Bicentennial, $150,000?

Chairperson Petsch – Yes.

Mr. Berkheiser – Once you get an idea on redoing the ball field, if the Township wants to take park property for maintenance, they should do the ball field. When we did the Library, we had pavilions and everything over there and they moved the pavilions as part of the cost of the Library.

Chairperson Petsch – All right.

Director England – Okay.

$150,000 was budgeted for Bicentennial for the pavilion/picnic area and the wiffle ball field.

2. WISE WOODS

Director England – Water bottle fill station.

Mr. Berkheiser – Yes, that's the only thing I think, while we have the well and the water. I don't know how far away it really is.

Director England – I'm going to put $30,000 to be safe for the copper piping.

Mr. Berkheiser – I thought once it was over there we didn't have to do that. I thought it was only because it ran across the other area. This isn't running across that. This is cutting under the road.

Director England – It doesn't matter. The Army Corps of Engineers and the County Health Department require it.

Vice Chairperson Walker – To run copper piping to everything?

Mr. Berkheiser – Well, the well is 800 feet away from where we wanted it to be because of the possibility of contaminants. When we bought the property, we were told it was all remediated and there were no contaminants, but nobody can seem to find that paperwork.

Director England – That's why it took a year to get approval.

Mr. Berkheiser – So they finally put the well in. I'm not sure if all the stuff is in at the Dog Park.

Director England – Not yet.

Discussion continued regarding running copper water lines at the parks, along with the cost of the well, which was $75,000 and included running a copper line to the Dog Park.

$30,000 was estimated for Wise Woods and Director England will get an estimate from Jason for the water bottle fill station and copper water lines.

3. SNOWY RIDGE

Mr. Berkheiser – For Snowy Ridge, I guess we just leave it. Again, when we're doing these, prioritize them.

Director England – Yes.

Vice Chairperson Walker – Lighting would be more than $10,000.

Chairperson Petsch – If we light it, then we have to make a change to the policy, and everything else, right?

Director England – We would have to make a change in the ordinance.

Chairperson Petsch – How difficult is that?

Mr. Berkheiser – It's not an issue to change it.

Director England – I think two meetings, introduction and adoption.

Mr. Berkheiser – You could make the same argument here at Richardson, because at dusk it closes down. I think when and if we ever get to this one … To me, this is a placeholder. We've talked about expanding winter activities, so whether that's all over there, or some of it's over here; such as ice skating, but there's not a lot of parking.

Chairperson Petsch – No, and that would be a huge maintenance issue over there.

Discussion continued regarding a potential ice rink at Snowy Ridge.

Snowy Ridge was kept at $10,000 for lighting and other items.

4. DODGE PARK

Director England – At Dodge Park, the only thing I would suggest is maybe looking at the possibility of putting a small parking lot in at the driveway.

Mr. Berkheiser – We need to look at having the brush hog clearing out brush there, and maybe even doing it between the ball field and soccer field.

Director England – Allison met a contractor over there.

Mr. Berkheiser – Looking at the stuff up front and on the side?

Director England – We didn't do the side, just the front.

Mr. Berkheiser – So the brush …

Ms. Kennedy – So, you're talking about at Dodge. We did along the road. But I thought you guys mentioned inside.

Mr. Berkheiser – We wanted it from the parking lot to the …

Director England – The water line.

Mr. Berkheiser – Okay, and some of it's done or its growing back. The only other thing after we walked through was where the pathway …

Director England – I think we let our guys do that. I think if you have it brush hogged, you're opening up areas for motorized vehicles to access it. So, like the pathways and from the pavilion, how they're making their own pathway, we can do that. We can clear it and make a walkable path, but clearing out all the underbrush is going to encourage motorized vehicles.

Dodge Park remained at $25,000.

5. LONG PARK

Vice Chairperson Walker – Vegetation plan and management.

Ms. Vecellio – I think that's got to be done.

Director England – It hopefully will be done this year. They were hoping to do it at the same time they treat the phragmites, but I think we still need to keep it on here as a placeholder.

Ms. Vecellio – With rebuilding the covered bridge, is that just general maintenance, or does that go in there too?

Director England – We will put it on here. And anything that's general maintenance, you can still say it because I can add that to the regular budget.

Mr. Berkheiser – Are we talking of replacing the bridge?

Director England – Not necessarily.

Mr. Berkheiser – There are certain areas of it that really need work.

Chairperson Petsch – It's way more expensive to replace that than to go through and repair it properly.

Director England – But maybe hire like Cedar Works to come in and give it a fresh look.

Mr. Berkheiser recommended $100,000 for Long Park.

6. MAPLE GLEN

Vice Chairperson Walker – Signage?

Director England – That's not the entrance signs. It's the wayfinding signs within the park, and then the pavilion.

Vice Chairperson Walker – Are we just doing one pavilion?

Director England – I think you'd want to do two; one for each, the boys and girls.

Vice Chairperson Walker – Are they going to contribute to that?

Director England – [inaudible]. If they want to, we're not going to turn them away.
Ms. Vecellio – Why does that only say $100,000? When I was looking at the other sheets, it said $200,000 to $300,000 on the Capital Improvement Priorities.

Mr. Berkheiser – Because we haven't adjusted the money yet.

Director England – The price we have here is based on prices we got, and that is just a guesstimate when we do the Master Plan.

$100,000 was estimated for Maple Glen.

7. HICKORY GLEN

Director England – Hickory Glen would be the same at $100,000.

Vice Chairperson Walker – But we're going to do picnic tables there too?

Director England – Yes, picnic tables would be added this year.

Vice Chairperson Walker – So shouldn't that be a little bit more?

Chairperson Petsch – How much are picnic tables?

Mr. Berkheiser – A lot of it is going to depend on the pavilions, because we can't get them pre-made.

Chairperson Petsch – The kits.

Mr. Berkheiser – Yes.

Director England – We can, it's just going to be a little more.

Mr. Berkheiser – Apparently, they're more expensive than before, so Allison is going to check and see how much it would cost to build a 12x12.

Chairperson Petsch – To stick build one, with a metal roof? Trusses aren't that bad.

Director England – It saved us a lot of money doing that building that way.

Chairperson Petsch – We can get 10 foot trusses at Menard's.

Vice Chairperson Walker – It's the labor that will kill you.

Mr. Berkheiser – So, Hickory has got one pavilion, and at Maple Glen you're looking at two. That's three, and we were looking at another one at the pocket park, so that's four pavilions. I'd like to think there's some economy of scale.
Director England – We just need to know what size.

Hickory Glen remained at $100,000.

8. MILL RACE & BYERS

Director England – Just to give you an update. Allison heard back from the arborist from Oakland County. They're not able to come out and help anymore. They have restructured their department and that's not part of what they do. I met with an arborist last week about some trees that I have some concern about. He gave me a very reasonable price for those. He has given me a price for maintenance around this building. I think I'm going to have him meet me over there too and see what we can do, as well as at Dodge to address the bittersweet. I think we increase Mill Race because that bridge is going to be more than $100,000.

Discussion took place regarding the bridge work to be done, expanding for ADA accessibility and for emergency rescue transport vehicles. Mr. Berkheiser mentioned the pre-fab bridge by the Library; at least from the road, it does not look bad. Director England noted that the color could be changed. Pricing would be reviewed.

$150,000 and $25,000 budgeted for Mill Race/Byers, which includes the bridge, along with the forestry and tree management plans.

9. RICHARDSON CENTER

Director England – For Richardson, we are scratching the pathway to Reed Lake/kayak launch. I think we should redo or replace the play equipment that is 21 years old. We should put an all-inclusive playground there. I want to keep the dollar amount the same right now until I can get a quote for that, and then I can potentially use CDBG money to put in all-inclusive equipment.

Chairperson Petsch – Why are we removing the pathway?

Director England – Because it's so long.

Mr. Berkheiser – Originally when this was done, we had no place to do kayaks, and now we have that, along with an area for a pavilion and an area for a fishing dock. So hopefully they will go over to the Union Lake area.

Chairperson Petsch – Right, okay. I still think Reed Lake is just beautiful down there.

Mr. Berkheiser – But it's 400 yards of mosquito infested swamp to get there.

Richardson Center was kept at $400,000 budgeted.

10. UNION LAKE POCKET PARK

Director England – We're going to keep that as fishing dock, picnic tables and pavilion, and we've added barbecue. We will keep the dollar amount the same.

Union Lake Pocket Park was kept at $250,000.

11. VICTORY PARK

Director England – We have the future restroom, $300,000.

Mr. Berkheiser – We're going to try to look at the vault type system, not sewer. We don't want to do septic.

Victory Park was budgeted at $300,000.

12. CONSULTANTS

Director England – I kept Consultants at $40,000 to cover any additional costs we may have for the arborist.

ITEM 2: OTHER MATTERS

Mr. Berkheiser – When are we due for a reevaluation of our Parks Master Plan?

Director England – 2028.

Mr. Berkheiser and Director England discussed the Maintenance Director position and delegation. The Township Board is looking at Director England for the position from now until the end of the year.

Mr. Berkheiser initiated discussion of the employee budget.

Director England – For the general Parks budget, the only part we really deal with involves the Capital Improvements. This year, we had picnic tables, signs and security cameras. We do need to think if we want to do a Phase II for security cameras.

Mr. Berkheiser – If you're doing a Phase II, what falls under Phase II?

Director England – This year, we put security cameras at the Dog Park. We put cameras here at the Richardson Center to cover the restrooms and pickleball courts. We put cameras in at Bicentennial, and we replaced the security system at Dodge for Scarlet's.

Mr. Berkheiser – So not on the Library side.

Chairperson Petsch – The Library has it's own cameras, doesn't it?

Director England – Yes.

Mr. Berkheiser – But it doesn't cover out that far to cover the park. But we haven't had issues.

Chairperson Petsch – Right, but you've got a lot of traffic coming in and out of there all the time.

Mr. Berkheiser – Right, and that's part of opening things up.

Director England – In my opinion, it would be Maple Glen and Hickory Glen, and you know we did just have the issue of people lighting fireworks, so we at least need to have a camera up to know that people are in the park at 10:00 at night.

Discussion took place regarding damaged Flock cameras in the Township. Director England noted that the security cameras in the parks are not specific to license plates. Discussion continued regarding the need for security cameras, and clear images at night at the park entrances.

Mr. Berkheiser – Maple and Hickory Glen. What else is there?

Director England – Wise Woods.

Mr. Berkheiser – I think if you're expanding, what about the kayak park?

Director England – That would be good because people always boat at night.

Mr. Berkheiser – I just get frustrated spending all this money to protect the parks.

Chairperson Petsch – Hickory has been way better since we opened it up. That cut down on the problems tremendously.

Vice Chairperson Walker – But if we're going to build new pavilions and put in new picnic tables, why not put in security.

Discussion continued regarding brush hogging and increasing visibility in the parks to enhance safety and security also. Ms. England noted that she would put $75,000 on the Phase II security camera project. Mr. Berkheiser and Director England also discussed clearing at Victory Park and Hickory Glen, along with the need to inform neighbors of the property lines for Township property and discourage encroachment.

Mr. Berkheiser – I have to go, but I would like you guys to talk about employees. Is that in here?

Director England – It's on your sheet, right here.

Mr. Berkheiser – What is it you currently have?

Director England – $250,375-

Mr. Berkheiser – No, we have a director.

Director England – Yes, but this is all of it. I currently have 3 full-time, including myself, so 2 full-time and a part-time.

Mr. Berkheiser – And your goal with the full-time that one is directed toward Parks and one toward the Senior Center.

Director England – Yes.

Mr. Berkheiser – And the part-time is for what?

Director England – The senior center. And I would like to bring that person in as part-time and then potentially move them up to full-time.

Mr. Berkheiser – So you want to change it to a director.

Director England – Yes, and 3 full-time.

Mr. Berkheiser – What are your currently funded at?

Director England – 2 full-time and one part-time.

Mr. Berkheiser – So you want to move that up to full-time. Okay. And I'm guessing you're going to be supporting the maintenance budget too.

Director England – Yes.

Mr. Berkheiser – So, under maintenance, what is it that you've got, if you know?

Director England – Yes, so we're going to have 3 full-time, plus a manager.

Mr. Berkheiser – They're going to advertise. So, one manager and 3 full-time.

Director England – And we have approval to hire 2 more full-time, which would put you at 5 full-time.

Mr. Berkheiser – So that's what is in our budget currently, 5 full-time and a manager.

Director England – Yes. And I would like to add seasonal help.

Mr. Berkheiser – That's not in the budget now?

Director England – No.

Mr. Berkheiser – Is that our grass cutter sort of?

Director England – Yes.

Mr. Berkheiser – What are you thinking with that?

Director England – Probably 4 seasonal.

Mr. Berkheiser – And is that full-time?

Director England – Full-time, temporary.

Mr. Berkheiser – So seasonal meaning April through October?

Director England – Yes.

Discussion continued regarding availability for college kids and others, seasonal landscaping tasks for maintenance staff, and comparing contracting costs with employee costs.

Director England – Depending on how that goes, I might add another full-time employee.

Chairperson Petsch – You need more staff because we took on so much more of a load.

Director England – Yes, we did. We will look at contracting more out and other options.

Mr. Berkheiser – Well, I think a lot of it is trying to hire anybody temporary.

Director England – Steve has a bunch of ideas.

Mr. Berkheiser – Unless part of that temporary is also the winter.

Director England – His ideas are to go to the schools and job fairs. Nobody has ever done that.

Mr. Berkheiser – High schools? I thought there were issues with insurance and riding mowers.

Director England – As long as they're 16, they could do weed whipping, trimming and assistance.

Mr. Berkheiser – Okay. I got to go. And you know Mr. Weber is going to ask for numbers to support that.

Director England – I know, I'm prepared.

Discussion continued regarding the job pool for manual labor maintenance positions, union positions, and licensing required.

>Mr. Berkheiser exited the meeting at 6:39pm.

Chairperson Petsch – What else do we have going on here?

Director England – My plan is to finish the budget, the general maintenance items, which Steve and I will work on. And then any other capital improvements that you think of.

Chairperson Petsch – We're going to schedule one more meeting, correct?

Director England – We will have our regular meeting.

Chairperson Petsch – So everybody needs to go to their park and see if there's anything we need to add to the budget?

Director England – Our meeting is on August 24th, so I will have a breakdown of closer pricing on all of this by then, and we can make our formal approval and send it to the Board. The next meeting is also our picnic, and we will send an email out.

Ms. Kennedy – The August 24th meeting is here at the Richardson Center. Do we need to set priorities?

Director England – I was going to follow the priority list from last year, with one exception. I will move Victory Park down.

1) Mill Race/Byers
2) Long Park
3) Hickory Glen
4) Maple Glen
5) Kayak Launch
6) Victory Park

ITEM 3: ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Vecellio, supported by Walker, to adjourn the meeting at 6:46pm.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

_____

Krystal Schwartz, Secretary

2027 Open Space Budget Summary of 08/03/26 Special Parks Meeting (In order of discussion in the meeting minutes)	
Bicentennial Park Pavilion, Picnic Area, Wiffle Ball	$150,000
Wise Woods Water Bottle Fill Station (copper water lines)	$30,000
Snowy Ridge Lighting, other	$10,000
Dodge Park Misc.	$25,000
Long Park Aquatic Vegetation Plan & Management	$100,000
Maple Glen Signage, 2 Pavilions	$100,000
Hickory Glen Signage, Pavilion, Picnic Tables	$100,000
Mill Race/Byers Bridge Forestry & Tree Management Plans	 $150,000 $25,000
Richardson Center All Inclusive Playground	$400,000
Union Lake Pocket Park Fishing Dock, Picnic Tables, Pavilion, Barbecue	$250,000
Victory Park Restroom Facility	$300,000
Consultants Arborist	$40,000