

**LINCOLN CHARTER TOWNSHIP  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
SPORTS COMPLEX WORKSHOP**

**Monday, June 5, 2006**

A workshop was scheduled by the Parks Commission to focus on development of the community sports complex bordering Rockey Weed Road and Cleveland Avenue and to gather community input.

The meeting began at 6:40 p.m. in the Large Group Instructional Room A-C at Lakeshore High School, 5771 Cleveland Avenue, Stevensville.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Todd Gardner, Kim Risk, Rich Knapp, John Hoskins, and Bill Tucker. **ABSENT:** Rick Knight and Mike Lucker.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Planning consultant Pam Blough of P.M. Blough, Inc., Tracy Sanders, Scott Smith, Township Treasurer Terrie Smith, Debra Trapikas, Bruno Trapikas, Kelly Branch, Larry Ward, Debbie Bly, Holly Schewe, Fran Elliott, Brian Samuel, Tom Mikel, Bill Bancroft, Township Trustee Deb Peterson, Karen Reinhardt, and Township Trustee Marc Florian.

**1. History of 80-acre Complex – Todd Gardner:** The sports complex is made up of five parcels. In 1991, land was donated for baseball and softball fields with most of the current infrastructure. Around 1994, the township purchased two more parcels at a cost of \$240,000 on behalf of parks. In 2004, a donation by the Bancroft/Kohn Foundation funded a 10-acre purchase adjacent to the baseball fields. The last adjoining parcel was then purchased by the township on behalf of parks for \$150,000 and financed over a 5-year period. Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) funds paid for early improvements to fencing and parking lots. For the last ten to fifteen years, the Parks Commission has been responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the complex, with sports and recreation groups collaborating on improvements and ongoing care.

**2. Review of Master Parks Plan for Complex:** Gardner introduced Pam Blough of P.M. Blough, Inc., Grand Haven, who was the planning consultant for the Master Parks Plan. After acquired all 80 acres in the complex, the Parks Commission developed 5-year Master Parks Plan. Led by Blough, the process began in March, 2004. The plan was adopted by the commission in October, 2004.

Several public workshops were held to receive community ideas. Important feedback included:

- the sports/recreation complex was important to people in the community
- baseball, softball, and soccer fields should stay where they are
- a soccer/football tournament field was needed
- a bathroom/concession stand building at the south end was needed
- a picnic area and playground area should be added
- the Parks House and barns should remain available for parks maintenance staff and storage for sports/rec programs
- a disc golf area would add to recreational use and incorporate more trees
- a large indoor facility with multiple uses was needed for the future
- a performing arts amphitheatre was desired and could share bathroom facilities at the south end
- enough parking should be built in and space saved for it
- a walking trail was desired around soccer fields, with connections to other areas of the complex for multiple loops, and tied in to future township recreational trail

**3. Projects Underway – Todd Gardner:** The Parks Commission has looked for ways to get additional funding to boost Capital budget. One way is a player registration fee for every participant in a sports/recreation program using township parks facilities. This spring the commission started charging registration fees for each player of each sport (\$10 for Lincoln Township resident, \$15 for non-resident, with family maximums of \$20 and \$30, respectively). Collected fees are to be reserved for capital projects at each sport facility and could potentially be used as matching funds for grant applications. Parks asked the sports/recreation groups to prioritize their needs and committed to fund the priority projects first. Gardner provided further explanation and clarification of registration fees for audience.

A bathrooms/concession facility for the soccer fields was considered the top project priority. Discussion of Parks' yearly expenses at soccer fields (est. \$26,000) and at baseball fields (est. \$30-32,000). These figures include water, electric, mowing and upkeep.

Another priority is moving the Rocket Football program from the Community Park to the sports complex. Parks is receiving donations towards field improvements. The football group has a plan in place and property surveyed to make a tournament field for both football and soccer. Parks may be spending an undetermined amount towards sod, irrigation, and drainage this year for the project.

Parks is looking to fund improvements to the baseball and softball dugouts and minor improvements to the north end bathrooms, but not with capital funds. Discussion of dugout replacement at an estimated \$3,000 per dugout. The dugout replacement project may be done over time and may need grants or donations. Parks is considering long-lasting, maintenance-free materials.

Additional parking and lighting for soccer fields is also being considered. The township has committed \$150,000 of Township Sewer and Water Revenues to extend water and sewer lines to the south end of complex.

**4. Potential Grant and Funding:** Pam Blough presented information on grants, what is and is not available for sports complex improvements.

**a) Land and Water Conservation Fund** – This grant comes from the federal government through the National Parks Service to the state's Department of Natural Resources. Usual grant deadline is April 1<sup>st</sup>; however this year there was a delay in approval of allocated federal dollars. The grant was not announced until after March, with a total state appropriation of \$781,000. Half is designated for state parks and half for local parks, leaving a pot of \$390,000 for statewide local projects. Requirements include a 50% match, and a limited range of \$30,000-75,000 in grant dollars per project. Applications are due July 1, 2006.

**b) Natural Trust Fund** – This grant does not apply to recreation field development or improvements. It would only apply to projects at township beachfront parks or North Lake Park with a natural body of water.

**c) Clean Michigan Initiative** – This is a bond issue for recreation development for both state and local parks with grants up to \$1 million per project that becomes available every five to six years. There is no active legislation right now.

Blough explained how a Master Parks Plan is a requirement when applying for DNR grants. The Lincoln Township Master Parks Plan is good through 2009 and can be updated any time. In response to audience question, "How do other communities get it done?", Blough stated the following:

- They have a plan.
- They have user fees in place. Registration fees are most common. Blough considered \$10/\$15 fee an average amount and recommended scholarship programs to help families.

- They use bond issues to make up big chunk. They generate revenue from player fees and/or from concession income to back up bonds. Revenue bonds paid through fees or services do not require voter approval. Bond income can also be seed money to leverage grants. (A Special Assessment District is not applicable for a sports complex.)
- They have strong community support.

Grants through national sports organizations are generally in the \$3-5,000 range and have an easier application process. The key to success with smaller grants from organizations and foundations is getting several people to write them. Blough cautioned that these smaller grants most likely cannot be used as matching funds to get larger grants. Gardner suggested considering a program like Meijers Community Rewards to raise funds for the soccer organizations.

Blough explained that most grants will not accept work already completed or money already spent on a project as matching funds. She advised careful consideration of strategy and timing of future grant applications. The DNR Land and Water Conservation Fund grant recipients will be approved this October and money will be available early next year to begin projects.

Gardner went over Improvement Schedule for all township parks as listed on page 67 of the Master Parks Plan.

#### **5. Audience Ideas and Comments:**

- *It seems like we would need someone assigned full-time to pursuing grants.*  
Blough responded many park systems have a director who is assigned to work on grants 50% of the time, a separate Millage to fund parks, or a local foundation dedicated to parks and recreation improvements.
- *What percent of our township budget is spent on parks?*  
Gardner answered approximately 2.7%, amounting to a little over \$8.00 per township family.
- *It seems like parks are not a priority in our township.*  
Blough and commissioners replied that people need to go to the township board and ask them to make parks a priority and ask them to help. Supporters need to rally.
- *Improvements to our parks won't happen without township leaders backing. A project like the bathrooms and concession stand won't succeed because the Parks Commission needs more money.*  
Gardner stated that with more money, Parks could hire a full-time Recreation Director. Risk said that when Master Plan visioning sessions took place, the number one priority supported by all attendees was a Parks Recreation Director. When the commission asked for money to hire one during the subsequent budget hearing, they were denied. Blough suggested a project committee be pro-active and pursue getting a Recreation Director.
- *Would other communities share information on getting projects done?*  
Blough stated other communities are usually willing to share information. She said the success rate of recreational millages is high in Michigan, but there is a limit of 1.5 mills.
- *In response to needing representatives from soccer and football to form a committee, soccer supporters said community volunteers are burned out.*

Blough said Parks is looking for community support to make improvements happen. She recommended three ways community could help: 1) Form a committee, 2) Get township support if you feel you don't already have it, 3) Determine how to raise project money and let the community have a say.

- *Soccer supporters complained about mowing of fields, lack of fertilizer, and general conditions at the soccer complex.*
- *Bill Bancroft spoke in support of momentum with current Parks Commission and the need for unity amongst the sports and rec groups.*
- *What about examples of schools involved with management of parks and rec programs?*  
Blough said there were schools doing this as part of "Wellness Program" initiatives. Often schools benefit sports and rec programs by donating services such as copying, registration, mowing, and basic maintenance. She also gave an example of a YMCA directing a local parks recreation program. Blough stated there are a variety of cooperative agreements out there, but stressed that fragmented groups accomplish much less.
- *Township Treasurer Terrie Smith responded to comments about lack of township support for parks. She stated the township has committed \$360,000 to Parks out of less than 1 mill for the entire township budget. The full township board supports seeking a Millage for Parks. Cuts in state revenue sharing have taken away the ability for the township to fund "nice" projects over necessary projects.*  
Gardner responded that cuts in revenue sharing have fluctuated, but only slightly in the last several years.
- *Township Trustee Marc Florian questioned if Parks Commission has concerns with asking for a Millage.*  
Gardner explained that Lincoln Township Parks once had a Millage, but it expired. Discussed how our community does not have a good success rate of passing millages and criticism of last attempt Parks made to pass a Millage in the late 1990s.
- *Would Parks consider both a millage and revenue bond?*  
Millage funds are not usually focused on one park, but rather the whole parks system. Millage funds can be used for both capital and operating expenses. To pass a millage would require a special drive and promotion push, requiring a lot of time and effort to garner support.
- *Parks Commission Chairman Todd Gardner asked township officials present if Parks received \$250,000 from a millage, would that be a net gain for Parks budget or would Parks face cuts in current operating budget?*  
Florian responded it would depend on the township budget and would be subject to negotiation.
- *Are water funds restricted for water/sewer projects?*  
Township officials present said funds are restricted. A water tower is going to cost \$3 million and the township needs to repair and/or replace aging water lines. It was also pointed out that \$150,000 of water funds are allocated for water/sewer work at the soccer fields this fiscal year, which may or may not be available to carry over.
- *Discussed running sewer and water to soccer fields, pouring a slab and starting bathroom/concession stand project with the understanding the start-up money could not*

count as matching funds. Bathrooms would be Phase One and Concession Stand Phase Two. Architectural drawings and estimated costs would be needed first, and then funding sources would be determined. Consider a millage rally team?

- Discussed possibility of Parks running future concession stand and controlling the revenue stream to back a bond issue.
- Discussed forming a recreation authority to raise revenue to back bonds and fund a Recreation Director. The authority would oversee general management of all sports and recreation programs for the township.
- Discussed sources of township revenues, budgeting process and financial reporting.

**6. Action Plan for Grant Project:** Debbie Bly offered to put together a project committee. Kelly Branch offered to head a Recreation Authority Committee.

Operations workshop concluded at 9:40 p.m.

Kimberly Risk Date 6-8-06  
Submitted by Kimberly Risk  
Parks Commission Secretary

T.C.G. Date 7.11.06  
Approved by Commission  
Todd Gardner, Parks Commission Chair