



Minutes of **JOINT SPECIAL MEETING**
Held **July 22, 2013**

Township of Springfield

Laura Moreau, Clerk

Call to Order: Supervisor Walls called the July 22, 2013 Joint Special Meeting of the Springfield Township Board and the Springfield Township Parks Commission to order at 6:35 pm at the Springfield Township Civic Center, 12000 Davisburg Road, Davisburg, MI 48350.

Board Members Present

Collin Walls	Township Supervisor
Laura Moreau	Township Clerk
Jamie Dubre	Township Treasurer
Marc Cooper	Township Trustee
Judy Hensler	Township Trustee
David Hopper	Township Trustee
Dennis Vallad	Township Trustee

Commission Members Present

Jean Vallad	Chairperson
Diane Baker	Commissioner
Roger Bower	Commissioner
Elena Danishevskaya	Commissioner
Angela Spicer	Commissioner
Jennifer Tucker	Parks Director

Supervisor Walls asked if there were any additional questions or concerns to consider for Agenda Item #7. Clerk Moreau suggested discussing the potential for a shared parking lot for Davisburg Cemetery and Shultz Park but noted the agenda is quite long. It was agreed that this item would be considered if time allowed.

Agenda:

1. Parks & Recreation Office—Civic Center space planning and cost sharing

Supervisor Walls noted that minutes were provided in the meeting packet regarding previous Board discussion of office space planning. He summarized that the Building Department will eventually need more space but the former building office (NOHLC’s current office) is larger than necessary. The Board believes that the larger office occupied by NOHLC is needed by Parks & Recreation. NOHLC has been notified that by the end of 2013 the Township could be asking them to relocate and NOHLC has already started a search. Supervisor Walls distributed a diagram of the office space currently housed by Parks & Recreation and NOHLC. The diagram indicates that the NOHLC space is more than double the size of the current Parks office.

Chairperson Vallad inquired about the Parks & Recreation office furniture that was purchased during the office reorganization. She asked if that furniture could be utilized in the new space or if it would stay as is for use by the Building Department.

Supervisor Walls explained that the furniture is modular and could be moved to the new space.

Commissioner Baker asked what, if any, physical changes would have to be made to the space.



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Supervisor Walls explained that the only requirement would be to either lower the main counter for accessibility or remove a wall at the entry and add a counter.

Trustee Hopper stated that if Parks is interested in moving to this space, it would be easy enough to take an inventory of furniture, make physical changes and get Parks situated first. The Building Department doesn't need much in terms of work stations and could be moved sometime afterwards.

Director Tucker and the Parks Commissioners present indicated the additional space would be beneficial and they were in support of the move.

Supervisor Walls stated that he will get together with Property Manager Mike Forst and Director Tucker to start planning the physical changes and to prepare for the move.

Clerk Moreau asked if it would be the intent to have Parks in the new space for the 1st of the year and questioned when NOHLC would need to vacate. It was determined that the Township would need a month to prepare and should request that NOHLC is out before December 1.

Supervisor Walls noted that a memo regarding Civic Center cost sharing was also included in the meeting packet. He stated that no decision has been made to charge Parks for their space but hopefully the information sheds some light on what it costs to operate the building.

2. Millage Renewals—Parks Millage expires 12/2014 (agenda listed 2014, Parks millage actually expires 12/2013), Police 12/2015

Supervisor Walls explained that the Township passed a 3rd Police Millage in 2010. The intent would be to consider merging the two millages that expire in 2015 so that there are two 1.5 mills Police Millages with staggered expiration dates.

The group discussed expiration dates and when to ask voters for renewals. It was generally agreed that it will be necessary to keep the Parks Millage at .75 mills so that it would be a renewal on the ballot and not a new millage. Considering the short four year term and the other millage expiration dates, it was suggested to renew the Parks Millage for a longer term than was previously passed. A concern was raised that if the millage request is a renewal that all details would have to remain the same—including the term. Clerk Moreau agreed to investigate if renewing for a different term is an option.

It was determined that the Parks Millage must seek renewal in 2014 but the Township might consider waiting until 2016 to request renewal of the Police Millages.



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3. Senior Services—Goals, options and possible shared services with Independence Township

Supervisor Walls explained that several weeks ago he met with the Pat Kittle, Independence Township Supervisor, Dick Carlisle (Planner for both communities) and each township's attorney to discuss another matter that was on the July Township Board agenda. During the meeting, the Independence representatives happened to mention plans for a new Senior Center. Supervisor Walls stated that maybe with this Senior Center effort, Springfield Township could help. This brief discussion led to another meeting last week with Tom Stone (representing Independence senior's group), Supervisor Kittle, Barb Rollin – Independence Director of Senior Services, Supervisor Walls, Director Tucker and Sarah Richmond (representing Springfield's Young at Heart). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how Independence and Springfield could work together and share services for seniors. Supervisor Walls explained that he's not sure where the effort is going but the best result from the meeting is that the two communities took the first step. Independence representatives explained that Springfield seniors can join their program and pay residents fees or are welcome to participate as non-residents. Springfield representatives offered use of the Hart Community Center for larger gatherings that the Independence Senior Center currently cannot accommodate.

Board members, Commissioners and Director Tucker discussed current services available to Springfield seniors and considered the expected rise in the 50+ population in our area.

Trustee Cooper explained that he doesn't believe that the seniors currently attending the Young at Heart Thursday lunches would travel to Independence Township to participate there.

Clerk Moreau stated that she considers the discussions with Independence to be an opportunity to expand senior services—not to replace our current program.

Treasurer Dubre stated she is always in favor of sharing services but wants to see what Independence has and what they have in mind before any decisions are made.

Trustee Hensler noted that the seniors who attend the Thursday senior lunch are generally older and the group is not very active. This is a nice program but not one that she participates with very often because she wants more activity and interaction.

The group discussed the varied needs and interests of the senior population and determined that the Thursday Young at Heart lunch is a good program and may be important to continue; however the Township should look for ways to serve and engage a wider range of seniors. There was general agreement that Springfield could better serve this segment but there was some concern about resources and staff available to expand the program.



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4. General Fund Contributions—Phone system replacement and 2014 request

Supervisor Walls explained that Director Tucker approached him with a question she continues to receive about the General Fund contribution that went to Parks & Recreation prior to the Parks Millage approval. While he is surprised that this question is still being asked, he prepared a brief report titled “Where Did the Money Go?” to help address the question. The report summarized a decrease in Taxable Value amounting to \$90,000 not collected in 2011 and 2012, over \$563,000 that was required to support other funds and a significant decrease in State Shared Revenue.

Clerk Moreau was also surprised that this question is still being asked and that the question is hard to answer for anyone involved in educating residents about the millage proposal in 2010. She reminded the group of how the residents were educated of the burden on the General Fund as a result of what Supervisor Walls’ report details. The group discussed the need to answer questions and educate residents prior to the millage renewal proposal appearing on the ballot.

Regarding the phone system replacement, Supervisor Walls explained that minutes were included in the meeting packet to provide a background of the discussions that took place prior to purchasing the system. Parks & Recreation and the Library were not asked to pay their portion of the new system, however the capital expenditure would be considered along with any other contribution request from Parks for 2014. With the 2014 proposed budget, Parks & Recreation is requesting a \$24,350 contribution from the General Fund to fund a utility vehicle, dump trailer and wireless headsets for the office.

Clerk Moreau believes that the natural areas continue to expand and with the Endowment Fund, there is the potential to expand that even more. She was in favor of the 2013 budget decision to work together to expand the trails in the north Shiawassee property and would like to see capital improvements funded that would help Parks & Recreation care for our natural areas. Also the Township relies on Parks & Recreation, in the absence of any DPW, to help maintain the cemetery and other Township properties and she believes that the utility vehicle and dump trailer will be important assets. She is not sure how the Parks Commission prioritizes at budget time but she would put maintaining park property at the top of the priority list, followed by maintaining facilities like Hart Center, pavilions, playgrounds and courts. These are important assets to the entire Township. Clerk Moreau stated she is in favor of funding these equipment purchases to help Parks help the entire Township. She does not support purchasing the headsets but would like to see some discussion about the \$23,000 being considered for the utility vehicle and trailer.

Trustee Cooper stated that he reviewed last year’s budget and compared it to this year’s budget and he noticed that there is nothing set aside—Parks is looking to the Township to fully fund their capital improvements. He stated that equipment is something Parks has to have; there has to be something planned for in the budget. He believes that Parks should



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plan for equipment purchase and replacement and set aside funds and then ask the Township for help.

Treasurer Dubre requested that the Parks Commission use round numbers when preparing their budget. Board members agreed.

Trustee Hopper stated the Board made a decision in the past to help Parks fund their capital improvements; the Board is not going to get involved in the day-to-day operations. Parks has taken the direction of expanding the trails and has acquired more property. He believes the utility vehicle would be a big asset. He understands the point that Parks does not have money set aside for the purchase, but he wants to see some amount of fund balance left at the end of the year. If it takes \$33,000 to purchase the equipment, he believes it's a worthy purchase. The utility vehicle has been talked about for a number of years and it would make Parks much more efficient.

Treasurer Dubre does not support funding the headsets and suggests that if Parks does make the purchase, they should only buy one. She stated that she supported the utility vehicle years ago and that is something she's in favor of. She believes that the equipment will have an impact on their biggest function of maintaining properties. As for the dump trailer, she has not made a decision yet because the Board has not had an opportunity to look at all the budgets in totality. She doesn't know if she'd be in favor of both equipment requests.

Supervisor Walls stated that, like Treasurer Dubre, he hasn't put all the budget requests into perspective. He does not automatically see a problem with the utility vehicle but is uncertain about the functionality of a dump trailer. The utility vehicle is multi-functional but the decision to fund all or a portion of it is not something he can decide at this time. As for fund balance, he believes the amount has reached the point that Parks can and should have already set aside funds for specific uses. It indicates that you have a longer range plan. If disaster hits, you can access those funds but you have the money earmarked so that you mentally consider it's not available for operations. Parks should also be setting aside funds every year for contingency.

Trustee Vallad questioned the need for the dump trailer but believes the utility vehicle would be very functional. He added that Parks needs to figure out a direction in order to put money away. Comp time keeps building and he questions if we are trying to do too much. With all the programs and events, do we need to back off a little and figure out what's important? He wants to see a plan to get rid of comp time or get it down and keep it down to a reasonable level.

The group discussed the importance of controlling the extra hours, limiting comp time or paying it out. Clerk Moreau added that she agrees with the goal of eliminating the accrued comp time but she believes that Trustee Vallad was getting at an even larger point—that is that Parks might be spreading staff too thin and trying to do too much with their resources. If



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Parks continually finds itself in situations where they have to keep paying out comp time and people are breaking down because they're trying to do too much, then that really gets to the idea of priorities.

Trustee Vallad concurred and stated that in his mind the comp time is a reflection of not doing a good enough job of planning what we do, for what we have. Are we trying to do too much?

Commissioner Bower noted that we're talking about that on both sides of the fence. We're talking about increasing senior services but there have been concerns about taking on additional property and we're also talking about not taking on too much. The group discussed the concern of staff being spread too thin and the need to establish priorities and set limits on what they can take on.

Chairperson Vallad added that they recently reconfigured staff and hopefully that will help address the comp time and having staff spread too thin.

Jennifer Tucker noted that this is not a new symptom. This is how Parks has functioned and it is not smart. She recognizes that the department can't add something else and while she appreciates staff enthusiasm for new offerings and improvements, she has had to "pull in the reins."

Trustee Hensler concurred that Parks is doing too much with too little. She believes they should probably scale their programs back and focus on what they do better. She is aware that there are programs that are cancelled for lack of participation and those programs should discontinue; last minute cancellations do not promote good will. As for capital improvement, she has always been in favor of the utility vehicle but knew nothing of the dump trailer until ready the budget request memo. Trustee Hensler would like to contribute toward the equipment purchases but not fully fund them; she believes that the General Fund should make a contribution but the effort should be cooperative. She is not in favor of funding the headsets.

5. Endowment Fund—Approval process

Supervisor Walls stated that he believes that as a matter of policy, before there is a discussion to apply for grant funds for a property acquisition, there should be a discussion with all three parties. It would be very embarrassing if the grant is approved and a property owner has had the property off the market and then the decision is no. Supervisor Walls questions if this is the time to be expanding property but the item is on the agenda as a policy matter. Any future considerations should include the Township Board early enough so that funding commitments can be made early in the process.



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Chairperson Vallad stated she is torn regarding the Endowment Fund. The fund is there for acquisitions but she recognizes that stewardship is more work for the department and they are already feeling short staffed. She noted 10% must be set aside for stewardship but questioned if that is really enough.

Clerk Moreau stated that the three bodies had already agreed that setting aside 10% for stewardship is appropriate. She stated this was with the understanding that grants and other opportunities to leverage the stewardship fund would be available. The agreement also allows that any interest earned on the Endowment Fund can be transferred for the stewardship portion.

Director Tucker explained the recent process of reviewing a possible acquisition and why the Parks Commission determined it was worth pursuing. She acknowledged the limitations on the department to take on additional property but believes that residents can ultimately determine if open space remains a priority by supporting future millage proposals.

Clerk Moreau stated that staffing and budget challenges should be part of the discussion when the three bodies decide if they will pursue a property. Supervisor Walls stressed that the discussion should happen early on; Clerk Moreau agreed with this and noted that if the Township Board and Parks Commission is made aware of concerns when a property is being considered, additional funds or staffing needs can be addressed as part of the decision to move forward.

Supervisor Walls added that we've owned the River Run Preserve (former Wilderness property) for several years and still nothing has been done with it. His opinion is that if Parks is looking for a General Fund contribution, it should be for the River Run property that makes it something you're proud to put your name on; right now there's not even a sign. If we acquire the property together, then we can have discussions ahead of time about the short, medium and long range dollar commitments and how it will be funded.

Chairperson Vallad stated that the fund is so large that it really represents the potential for a lot more property. It's great to have the fund but this is a concern for her.

Clerk Moreau stated she is not concerned about the size of the fund and the potential for increased burden. Currently Parks & Recreation is helping to steward property that is not owned by the Township. There is no saying what property might eventually become available, but it is possible that an acquisition could use up a significant portion of the Endowment Fund but not increase the existing stewardship burden.

6. Shiawassee Trails Project—Update and next steps

Director Tucker explained that the Shiawassee Trails Committee had a meeting to look at how to connect trails. She distributed a map depicting existing trails and proposed connectors. The committee considered current burn unit limits and deer trails to find the



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easiest connections. Following the meeting the goal was to take a closer look at the proposed trails to finalize the location and determine what is needed to establish or improve each trail. One additional possibility is to improve the existing trail that leads to Davis Lake; this trail goes out into the fen. We could consider a board walk so that residents can experience the fen without potentially damaging it. The committee determined to build off of existing trails and the driveway to the ranger house to make connections.

The group determined that the proposed trails look appropriate and Parks & Recreation does not need further direction from the committee to get started. Parks staff will determine the exact routes based on ground conditions and will decide what can be mowed, what needs to be cleared and what will require gravel or boardwalk, and establish a budget.

Director Tucker asked if there is interest in getting an estimate to allow for a couple of vehicles to park at the Davis Lake trail entrance off of Eaton Rd. The general consensus was to get preliminary numbers to move back the fence and put down some gravel that would allow one or two cars to pull off the road safely. But gathering this estimate should not hold up any progress toward establishing the trail connectors by the fall. All were in agreement that the trail connections should be completed as soon as possible and definitely during 2013. Trail markers and maps are also a priority.

After costs estimates are prepared, Director Tucker will email the committee to determine how and when to meet again.

7. General Questions or Concerns

Supervisor Walls asked Clerk Moreau if she would like to address the Davisburg Cemetery/Shultz Park parking lot. Clerk Moreau noted it was very late and the group agreed to defer the conversation.

Adjournment:

Hearing no other business, Supervisor Walls adjourned the meeting at 9:37 p.m.

Collin Walls, Township Supervisor

Laura Moreau, Township Clerk