



## Harsen's Island St. Clair Flats Association

Minutes April 14, 2018

**Directors Present:** Craig Baloga, Todd Brady, Susan Bryson, George Covalle, Neva Covalle, Barbara Crown, Jim Laethem, David Martin, Melanie Most, Harold Stieber, Paul Stieler, Dennis Szymanski, Jerry Thiel, Lois Whipple;

**Excused:** Patrick Feighan, Jerry Freeman, Mike Hilla, Donna Halacoglu, Kathy O'Connor, Leonard Verlinden, Rosemary Wieczorek;

**Guests and Members Present:** Christine Baloga, Fred Cardinali, Dave Carruthers, George Crown, Kurt Marchwinski, Margaret Marchwinski, Peggy Osgood, Linda Schoonover, Jim Stieber, Debbie Thiel.

Barbara Crown brought the meeting to order at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall at 9:30 am with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The March 2018 meeting minutes were presented. **David Martin made the motion to approve the March 2018 meeting minutes, Jerry Thiel seconded to approve; all in favor, motion carried, minutes to be placed on file.**

### Executive Committee Reports

**Treasurer Report:** Harold Stieber presented the treasurer's reports for March 2018. Harold reported that the balance in the checkbook for March 31, 2018 was \$10,418.80, with total cash on hand being \$33,471.76. Full copies of the monthly Treasurer's Report are available by contacting Harold at stiebha@gmail.com.

**David Martin made the motion to approve the March 2018 treasurer's reports, Lois Whipple seconded to approve; all in favor, motion carried, reports to be placed on file.**

**Secretary Report:** Over 880 membership letters were sent out, and so far 214 paid memberships have been received including 5 brand new members. A total of 19 volunteers have signed up for upcoming opportunities on the back of their membership forms, which is a new addition to the form this year. There have already been 19 paid entries received for the Car Show this year.

**Communications:** A letter of thanks was received from the Harsen's Island Lions for the HISCFA's continuing generosity and support to their organization.

**Government Affairs:** The Great Lakes Islands Coalition is in the process of organizing an upcoming yearly event. Harold Stieber participates in a once-monthly phone conference to keep in contact with the rest of the islands included in the coalition. Harold stated he is looking for additional people to join him in representing Harsen's Island within the Coalition. The non-bridged islands represented in the Coalition are within the Great Lakes and that includes Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, and Ontario. This is an excellent opportunity for anyone looking to get involved with the future status of our Island community. Next year's event will take place on Madeline Island, Wisconsin. Please contact Harold if you would like more information.



Browne's Field: Dennis Szymanski stated that someone dug a culvert through the driveway to Browne's Field, which must run under the driveway and not through it. Dennis received two quotations for repairing the culvert properly and install stone to cover it is going to cost approximately \$1,000 plus the cost of the permit. Barbara Crown entertained the motion to approve \$1,500 for the cost of repairing the culvert and putting two loads of stone in and grade it, and perhaps repair the wooden retaining wall. **David Martin made the motion to approve \$1,500 for the cost of repairing the culvert and horseshoe drive to Browne's Field, Dennis Szymanski seconded. All in favor, motion carried.**

Barbara Crown stated that the advertising sign near the ferry is in pretty rough shape. The structure of it is what is of major concern, and Barbara would like to get some bids on possibly repairing or replacing the sign structure itself including the sign dividers and supports. Barbara is also going to reach out to the owners of the advertising to address faded or illegible signs, in addition to signs that are no longer valid (e.g. business that are no longer in business).

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- *Road Cleanup*: The HISCFA Adopt-a-Highway event is cancelled for today due to inclement weather. This event is rescheduled for Saturday, May 5, 2018 at 10:00 am, rain or shine. Plan to meet at St. Mark's Church for bags and vests. Be sure to wear brightly-colored clothing and bring sticks or rakes for reaching and picking up trash close to the water's edge.
- *Annual Membership Letter*: Barbara Crown said that all of the letters have been sent out to all of the members as well as the advertisers.
- *Island Cleanup*: The dates for this event have been scheduled for Saturday and Sunday June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Browne's Field. This event is sponsored by Clay Township. Remind your neighbors!
- *The Delta News*: The beginning layout of The Delta News for 2018 is currently underway.
- *Scholarships*: Applications have been received for this school year that is coming to a close. The scholarship committee will review the applications and determine which applicants will be awarded the scholarship this year.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- *Pavilion Lighting*: Neva Covalle contacted Hunter Electric (a local company) to obtain a quotation for updated lighting for the pavilion. They came back with a layout including a total of 19 dimmable fixtures with 50-watt LED lights, on one dimmer, using galvanized conduit and weather-proof junction boxes. The quotation came in at \$6,150 for parts, materials, and labor. The representative from the company stated that he would work with the organization to lower the cost due to the HISCFA being a 501(c)3 organization. Ordering the fixtures takes about two weeks and the installation would take 2-3 days beyond that. This cost does not include a permit. Jim Laethem mentioned there is other electrical work that also needs to be completed in other parts of Browne's Field. Dennis Szymanski mentioned the other work that needs to be done could be completed on our own. Christine Baloga mentioned that we should obtain some competitive bids, and several others agreed. Todd Brady volunteered to provide some other contacts to reach out to in order to obtain competitive bids. Neva will follow up once she has received additional quotations.
- *Survey Committee*: Christine Baloga mentioned that it will be important for Todd Brady to be involved in this project. The Association needs to set up a survey to provide some feedback to the Association as to what the members (and also other Island residents) would like to see from the Association in the future so



we can better serve the Island overall. Christine stated that she would set up a timeline, and Barbara Crown will initiate the preliminary meeting. Melanie Most will assist with the content / question development and proofing the survey.

- *Browne's Field Committee Meeting:* Barbara Crown and Patrick Feighan are going to set up a meeting to begin discussing items pertaining to Browne's Field and what is needed for the upcoming year. Patrick has provided a list of things that need to be done on a weekly, monthly, and even yearly basis. Barbara is targeting the initial meeting to occur on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018 as a tentative date, and will send out an email with the details when they are worked out.
- *Algonac Community Grant:* This topic came up abruptly and largely caught the Association off guard – the Association was notified of the possibility of a grant on a Monday in March, and then Barbara and Patrick obtained the forms, did some research, filled out the paperwork, and finally turned it in on that Friday. The grant was written for \$4,000 to be specifically applied to a new playscape at Browne's Field, which is estimated to cost around \$12,000 in total. Anything that we can get to assist with offsetting this cost would be wonderful to receive now that the Association is a non-profit organization. The determination on whether or not the grant has been awarded will be on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018.
- *Trunk-to-Trunk Sale:* A date for this event has been set for June 16<sup>th</sup> for this year, occurring at Browne's Field from 9am-12pm. Mike Hilla and David Martin agreed to assist Barbara Crown with this event. A second date is TBD depending on other events taking place and also popularity of the first event.
- *Concert in the Park:* The Association is trying to set up two dates on the island to take place at Browne's Field on July 27<sup>th</sup> and August 24<sup>th</sup>. These dates are potential dates and are not set at this time, and will depend on whether sponsors are obtained and whether the dates make sense depending on other events taking place around those same times.
- *Possible Millage:* There is a possible vote to subsidize a fire crew on the Island, and this may not actually involve a millage. ***The full discussion on this topic appears in the Appendix of this document.***
- *Social Media:* Todd Brady shared that at the next Association meeting in May, he will be bringing in some social media experts to present about how to better utilize our social media platforms to get the most outreach possible. Todd mentioned that social media is where people find us, and websites are where people find out *about* us. The website will need to be updated to improve the digital image of the Association.
- *Freighter Wash/Wake:* Patrick Feighan and Clay Township Supervisor Artie Bryson have been in contact with representatives from the Lake Carriers Association, Ship Owners Association, Captains and Pilots Association, Canadian carriers, and oceangoing vessels. In the past, Patrick and Artie have expressed concern to these organizations about large vessels creating a large wake and washing up over the seawall, and these organizations agreed that they will slow down during high water seasons. Both Artie and Patrick have personally observed slower freighter speeds, and provided that feedback to those organizations. They are keeping in contact with one another to continuously provide feedback to make sure both sides are satisfied.

Additional comments from directors or guests:

- ✓ Jerry Thiel mentioned that the HISCFA events now appear on the Algonac Community Calendar. The Association meeting in July is scheduled for the same day as the Car Show on Saturday, July 14<sup>th</sup>. There will be discussion about changing the date of the meeting and an update will be provided when there is one available.
- ✓ Christine Baloga mentioned that the Annual Letter was done really well this year, and suggested to place them on tables during events to promote membership.
- ✓ Dave Carruthers mentioned that the letter states that contributions are tax-deductible since the HISCFA is now a 501(c)3 organization but that it may be misleading to some. Harold Stieber clarified that some



contributions (not all) are tax-deductible to the extent of the law that you don't get anything in return, according to the IRS.

Next meeting will be Saturday, May 12, 2018 at **9:00 am** at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall.

**Neva Covalle made the motion to adjourn; seconded. All in favor; meeting adjourned at 10:39 am.**

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Most, Recording Secretary

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## APPENDIX



*George Covalle shared some discussion about staffing the Island fire station full time:*

There is a possible vote to subsidize a fire crew on the Island, and this may not actually involve a millage. George was reviewing his homeowner's insurance and asked his provider for some changes to his policy, which led to reviewing the premium. He asked how he could make his premium smaller, and they said he could look at his deductibles, but his agent mentioned that the reason the rates are so high is because the fire department is what it is. Fire departments are rated on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 is the worst) and the Clay Township Fire Department is rated at a 6. For example, if you lived in Detroit it would be a 2 or 3, but that has to do with the ability of the department to back itself up and availability of rigs and personnel and so on.

We all (in Clay Township) currently pay 1.625 mills toward fire protection, and in George's case, based on the taxable value of his property, comes out to \$66.71 for fire protection. For reference, George is paying \$178 for police protection. Fire is one of the smallest things we actually pay taxes for in the Township on a millage basis and on a dollar basis. Additionally, George lives on Bruckner Island, and none of the roads on Bruckner are serviced by the St. Clair County Road Commission, so there is a fund set up to take care of road maintenance costs, plowing, etc. Many other people who live on private roads also have a fund similar to this. These people pay an amount of money (to the township) so that they can draw from that money from time to time when those maintenance costs are required to be used. For reference, George is paying \$115 for that fund on his taxes (compared to the \$66 for fire protection).

George met with Clay Township Supervisor Artie Bryson, Fire Chief Rose, and Township Clerk Cindy Valentine, and ran this idea by the group: is it possible for Island residents to ask the township to increase our fire coverage? The group began by describing that the ideal coverage was a two-person crew, 24/7/365 which is what the Island had during the time the Island was covered under the now-expired grant. Even though all township residents are paying 1.625 mills for fire protection, the mainland is staffed 24/7 and the Island is only getting about two-thirds coverage. Currently the township is trying to keep the Island fire station staffed 100 hours a week (out of 168 possible).

George asked the group: can Island residents ask the township to assess the residents some amount of money to pay for full-time fire protection? Artie said they've already written three grants (which are being reviewed) for improvements to the fire department (which includes EMS). He's thinking about a bond issue of about a quarter of a mill to buy new equipment. The 1.625 mill on your tax assessment – it's called a millage but it's actually an assessment that the township board makes and reviews each year, so if they don't think they're getting enough coverage, they can raise that assessment and do that. Artie is planning on raising it next year. If the township is able to successfully do all of the things they're talking about doing, then they will cover everything and we won't have to see this suggestion that George is discussing. So even if these activities cost township residents some money, it should be reflected in a reduction in our insurance premiums by that change in rating for the fire department. The bond issue will be set for the August primary election ahead of the November election.

Artie also stated that if anything the township wanted to do actually failed, residents could go back to them and volunteer to pay some more, to pay the difference from what we're paying now to what would be needed for the Island budget to maintain 24/7 coverage. In the time since George spoke to Artie, our fire department rating actually went from a 6 to a 5, and the people on the out-islands went from a 10 to a 9 rating.