



Harsen's Island St. Clair Flats Association

Minutes January 12, 2019

Directors Present: George Covalle, Neva Covalle, Barbara Crown, Patrick Feighan, Jim Laethem, Melanie Most, Harold Stieber, Leonard Verlinden, Rosemary Wieczorek;

Excused: Todd Brady, Craig Baloga, Jerry Freeman, Donna Halacoglu, Mike Hilla, David Martin, Kathy O'Connor, Dennis Szymanski, Jerry Thiel, Lois Whipple;

Guests and Members Present: Artie Bryson, John L., Linda Pavia, Joanne Shirkey.

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

The November 2018 meeting minutes were presented. **Leonard Verlinden made the motion to approve the November 2018 meeting minutes, Jim Laethem 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 November and December 2018. Harold reported that the balance in the checkbook for December 31, 2018 was \$26,891.67, with total cash on hand being \$50,064.36. Full copies of the monthly Treasurer's Report are available by contacting Harold at HaroldS@hiscfa.org.

Patrick Feighan made the motion to approve the November and December 2018 treasurer's reports, Barbara Crown seconded to approve; all in favor, motion carried, reports to be placed on file.

Secretary Report: Neva Covalle stated there were over 200 postcards sent out to obtain email addresses for those that we do not currently have. A total of 21 email responses were received from the postcard mailing. If the HISCFA does not have your correct email address on file, please send an email to Neva@hiscfa.org to get on our mailing list. This is important for participating in member surveys (which may include prizes), as well as important Association-related communications.

Communications: Neva Covalle stated that a Thank You letter was received from the Clay Township Fire Department for a HISCFA member donation for \$50 to be strictly allocated for the Harsen's Island Fire Department.

Government Affairs: The FEMA Town Hall meeting that was previously scheduled for January 15, 2019 has been postponed. Over 1,200 structures will be pulled out of the existing floodplain but they are also looking at wind-blown water which has the possibility to affect a few additional properties. February 26, 2019 at 5:00pm is the tentative new date and time for this meeting. Clay Township currently pays over \$860,000 per year in flood insurance. It is highly encouraged for residents to attend this meeting to show the impact of FEMA's actions. Be seen AND heard. FEMA is asking for the public's opinions at this meeting, which is more important than simply hearing about the meeting afterwards. Please make every effort to attend if possible.



A review of the Island emergency/preparedness procedures has taken place. All of the utility companies and government entities are on board with the procedure and will begin staging the Island with the necessary equipment in the next couple of weeks.

Clay Township Supervisor Artie Bryson was present. He reported that Clay Township has acquired a grant through the DNR Trust Fund in order to secure funding for the property for the proposed kayak launch. Currently the township is working on getting information together to secure the closing. There is an environmental survey that is halfway done that must be completed, and after that a second appraisal must be done in order to set a closing date and secure the property. The property is approximately 9 acres and will contain a nature park and a kayak launch, including a walking area and a lookout tower. After that, the township plans on securing grants for development of the property. Currently the township already has buy-in from the county to provide a handicap-accessible kayak launch, there's a 25% match to buy the property, and the county agreed to split the cost / match the township, so effectively this property is only costing the township approximately \$14,000.

Supervisor Bryson stated that there's a \$2M project in the works for a St. John's Marsh habitat restoration. The DNR wants to do a habitat restoration to the marsh similar to what has been done on Harsen's Island. It was funded and backed by many organizations including Ducks Unlimited, Waterfowl USA, Pheasants for Tomorrow, etc. but the DNR and the DEQ were fighting over how to get it done. In the interim, the township published some proposed legislation on loosening the requirements the DNR has with the DEQ as it pertains to habitat restoration only. Supervisor Bryson stated he testified in front of the State House and the State Senate, got it passed, and the governor signed it a couple days before Christmas 2018. Hopefully with that done, Phase I will start this year, and Phase II sometime next year. They will be restoring somewhere along the lines of 4,000 acres; doing the inside this time. The goals are better access, better walking path, and phragmite control through elevated water levels (after getting rid of it in specific areas first).

The Association has been working with the DNR property on the Island for non-seasonal use (beginning January 2nd through August 31st each year). Check with the office between 8a-4p before venturing out there, but a general field map is available at the DNR office to illustrate the paths. Now that it is drained, it is not just the dykes that can be walked, but the fields, too. Please remember to dress appropriately.

Browne's Field: Patrick Feighan stated he has been working with Dennis Szymanski on obtaining quotations for getting a walking path around Browne's Field. There is 3,000 lineal feet around the field to cover, and at 8-foot wide (the size of the equipment), it seems like this can be accomplished for approximately \$15,000 if done ourselves rather than the \$70,000 that has been quoted previously by outside contractors. The path would be going around the field, inside of the drainage ditch, inside of the parking area, around the ball field, and along the adjacent property.

The Maryann McLane memorial garden committee co-chairs Patrick Feighan and Rosemary Wieczorek will be looking to get this going in the spring. They are currently looking for people to help plan this small garden project to be located near the pond and the gazebo.

The aging dock located in the pond will be dismantled as it is currently unsafe for use. In its place will be a wharf. This is currently in the planning stages.

Tom Korthals has been doing an excellent job with lawn maintenance at Browne's Field so that will continue in 2019.



OLD BUSINESS

- *Membership Letter:* The 2019 Annual Membership Letter is going to be prepared by Jerry and Debbie Thiel this year. The letter has been drafted and sent to the printer to begin the layout process. The advertiser letter for The Delta News and the signboard have had some minor updates, but they will be going out in the next couple weeks.
- *Survey Committee:* Melanie Most, Christine Baloga, and Barbara Crown have formed a committee for this initiative and have finalized a survey to send out soon. A paid SurveyMonkey account has been purchased to be able to obtain as many survey responses as possible. The decision was made to get a paid account because the free accounts only provide very limited responses.
- *Grant Writer:* Last year, Barbara Crown and Patrick Feighan put together information for a possible grant from the Algonac-Clay Community Fund, and a grant of \$1,000 was awarded to the HISCFA for use on the playground area. A Thank-You letter and photographs of the updates were sent to the foundation to illustrate what was done with the generous grant money (around the two smaller areas with the spring rockers and merry-go-round). The target for this year is to focus on the larger playground area under the climbing / playscape structure.
- *Great Lakes Islands Alliance:* A total of 14 different islands in the Great Lakes are included in this Alliance, and one of the benefits of this is that they are able to direct us towards the availability of grant workshops provided by the State of Michigan and funded by the DNR Trust Fund and some other organizations. The closest free workshop is going to be in Clarkston on January 24, 2019. The GLIA steering committee is putting together an Island Passport to incentivize island visitors to increase tourism on these islands in Michigan. The next annual GLIA meeting (in October 2019) will be held on Mackinac Island.

NEW BUSINESS

- *Amazon Smile Foundation:* This is a simple way for everyone to purchase from Amazon.com directly, while simultaneously donating to a charitable organization of your choice. The HISCFA is already signed up to participate, so users only need to allocate their charitable organization as the HISCFA and checkout their Amazon cart through **smile.Amazon.com**. Additional information is listed on the **hiscfa.org** website, the HISCFA Facebook page, and Nextdoor.
- *Potential Projects for 2019:* George Covalle wanted to discuss the potential projects to be completed at Browne's Field and decide where the Association would like to direct their attention for this year.
 - Swing area improvements – this is actually four times the area of the spring rockers/merry-go-round areas done last year, which cost \$3,000 (including \$1,000 of grant money).
 - Volleyball court relocation – during last year's events, it seemed like this court was in the way. Additionally it harbors hornets, so it may be worthwhile to grass it over instead of keeping it sand
 - Expand pavilion storage area – rather than borrowing or dragging from other Browne's Field locations (barns to pavilion and back again)
 - Purchase additional chairs and tables – doing this as opposed to borrowing from other organizations and to reduce movement between the barn(s)
 - Wooden picnic tables – keep them? They are very heavy and can be dangerous when moving
 - Other ideas?



Additional comments from directors or guests:

- ✓ George Covalle asked Supervisor Bryson about what the public is saying about the Clay Township Fire Department: Artie stated that the public seems content for the time being. The Harsen's Island fire station is being staffed 60% of the time currently, and the numbers are getting better all the time. Remodeling of the Island fire station is going well, with the bathroom almost done. Work is being done to the Island station's kitchen as well. Ventilation is scheduled to be going in at both stations very soon. There were several new hires and they are currently in training. Patrick Feighan stated that he got a lot of positive feedback as well.
- ✓ Joanne Shirkey mentioned that the tilework in the Harsen's Island fire station is outstanding. They are doing a fantastic job in there.
- ✓ Supervisor Bryson stated that the township will be retiring water debt in two years, and that the township wants to do a new feed to the island. Second feed would allow for taking water further down into The Flats, and the DEQ has been requesting this issue as well. The Township can probably hold/freeze the water rates steady for three years.
- ✓ Barbara Crown asked whether the money allocated in the Browne's Field Improvement fund is designated specifically for restroom facilities or otherwise. Harold stated that it currently is all in one fund, not earmarked for specific items (e.g. not specifically for restrooms, walking path, or otherwise).
- ✓ **Susan Bryson made a motion to have a specific fund for "Browne's Field Improvements: Restrooms"; Patrick Feighan seconded. All in favor; motion carried.**
- ✓ The Browne's Field permanent restroom facility / water station project will be a standalone committee going forward, and Susan Bryson agreed to be the chairperson.
- ✓ For this year's events, Susan Bryson agreed to chair the Pig Roast / Bonfire event, and Cindy Pilato agreed to chair Field Day.
- ✓ There was discussion about which donations that came in previously should be allocated specifically towards the restrooms, and Harold will be handling splitting up those donations into the specific funds.
- ✓ Artie asked whether three dates for Concert in the Park would work for this year. There was discussion about the dates for events and to avoid the Bonfire/Pig Roast conflict with the Idle Hour annual party which has occurred for the past two years.
- ✓ Dates have been set for some events for 2019: Classic Car Show – July 13th, Field Day – August 3rd, Pig Roast and Bonfire – September 14th (Susan Bryson to confirm no conflict with Idle Hour).

Next meeting will be Saturday, February 9, 2019 at **9:30 am** at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall.

Neva Covalle made the motion to adjourn; Leonard Verlinden seconded. All in favor; meeting adjourned at 10:52 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Most, Recording Secretary

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