



## Harsen's Island St. Clair Flats Association

### Minutes February 8, 2020

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

**Excused:** Susan Bryson, Lucy Burby, Jerry Freeman, Donna Halacoglu, Kathy O'Connor, Leonard Verlinden, Rosemary Wieczorek;

**Guests and Members Present:** Christine Baloga, Pat Binder, Maureen Boury, Lyn Gerds, Susan Gerds, Dennis Martz, Vicki Martz, Jim Neumann, Linda Pavia, Linda Schoonover, Joanne Shirkey, Diane Sullivan, Rich Sullivan.

George Covalle brought the meeting to order at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall at 9:31 am with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The January 2020 meeting minutes were presented. **David Martin made the motion to approve the January 2020 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 January 2020 Treasurer's Reports. Harold reported that the balance in the checkbook for January 31, 2020 was \$12,347.74, with total cash on hand being \$72,347.74. Harold noted that \$60,000 was transferred into an account held by the Community Foundation of St. Clair County. Full copies of the monthly Treasurer's Report are available by contacting Harold at [HaroldS@hiscfa.org](mailto:HaroldS@hiscfa.org).

**David Martin made the motion to approve the January 2020 treasurer's reports, Lois Whipple seconded to approve; all in favor, motion carried, reports to be placed on file.**

**Secretary Report:** There are three new members as of this year, and three members who have renewed early. The HISCFA will be posting a template letter to make it easier for residents to send to our government constituents regarding [House Bill 5401 \(2020\)](#) and [House Bill 5402 \(2020\)](#), if they so choose. The addresses for suggestions of where to send the letters will be posted as well.

**Communications:** No communications were received this month.

**Browne's Field:** Dennis Szymanski indicated that he will have a proposal to be discussed under New Business.

**Government Affairs:** George Covalle discussed the results of the township meeting that took place last week. As a reminder, all recordings of the township meetings are available on [YouTube](#). A sandbagging machine has been purchased, along with 100,000 sandbags for township use, and this topic will be further discussed at a *special meeting* this coming Wednesday, February 12, 2020 at 11:00 am at the township offices.

The other legislation to keep in mind is [House Bill 4807 \(2017\)](#) regarding oversight for the ferry. George Covalle mentioned that he wrote a letter to Senator Dan Lauwers suggesting they attend a meeting(s), because no matter



what the outcome is in the distant future (e.g. a bridge), in the interim everyone will still need to use Champion Auto Ferry. Along with the letter that was sent on behalf of the HISCFA, Craig Baloga spoke with several people in Lansing and was able to get confirmation that there will be a meeting with Dan Lauwers, in his office, at his desk, on February 19, 2020 from 2-3pm. Present for this meeting will be Craig, George Covalle, and Clay Township Supervisor Artie Bryson, as well as someone from the Michigan State Police (MSP). On the agenda will be various topics, with the main takeaway being the items discussed in the December 18, 2019 Clay Township High Water / Ferry meeting. The intent is to hold Dan Lauwers to his word and request the status of all of the items that he said he was going to get answers.

With respect to No Wake enforcement, Craig Baloga indicated he wishes to reach out to local marinas with correspondence to post in common areas alerting boaters to pay attention to the No Wake laws in our area. Many of the boaters that are plowing through our area are actually coming from somewhat distant areas whether upstream or downstream of us. This may be a good first step to at least get the word out about the high water concern for property owners. David Martin indicated he would be willing to go to the local marinas in the St. Clair Shores area.

A meeting attendee suggested reaching out to the news channels in late April / early May to remind boaters returning to the water that there are still No Wake laws in effect, and to be mindful of the potential damage that their wakes have on our properties.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- *Annual Membership Letter:* The letter is with the printer for a layout, and will be proofed once more after that is complete. The sooner the letter can go out, the sooner the memberships will start rolling back in. Barbara Crown stated she hopes to hear back from the printer this coming week.
- *Car Show July 18, 2020 Plan B:* The idea of *not* having the car show on the Island is not very attractive to many participants and attendees (because they look forward to driving around the Island and getting a meal there as well), and setting up the car show *off* the island is going to be a logistical nightmare. For now, the show is ON, and a decision to cancel will only be made at the last minute.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- *Membership Survey / Preliminary Findings:* Christine Baloga indicated that a list of active HISCFA member email addresses were uploaded into the survey system on January 17, 2020 which consisted of 541 contacts. On January 22, a reminder email was sent to 309 of those people who didn't open it or take any action, and the survey closed on January 26. Only four emails were undeliverable, and six people actually opted out of receiving any further communications from the HISCFA. There were 304 total responses, and 273 completed and 31 partial completions. The survey took about 7 minutes to complete, and it was a 90% completion rate. This survey program (SurveyMonkey) records your IP address which prevents people from taking the survey multiple times. Members who reached out about not getting the email to take the survey were handled on an individual basis, and we were able to get the survey to them individually. A synopsis of the survey results will be presented to the public once it can be put into an organized and concise manner. One interesting point was that when asked if they would like to be nominated to the HITA board, only 9 people said yes, 210 said no, and 57 were not sure.
- *Member Management Software:* Christine Baloga presented a description of a membership management system called Wild Apricot that is capable of doing a multitude of things associated with what the HISCFA



is doing already but very manually. The system is very robust. It is all integrated and can make a really nice and professional website, it has a mobile app, can encourage donations and keep members more involved. Through the 30-day trial, Christine was able to very easily create a website and was able to visualize many positive changes that could be made for the HISCFA, but of course at a cost. A two-year plan will cost around \$136/month. People (members) are able to pay for events, purchase tickets, donate to the Association, renew memberships, etc., all through the website. There are administrative rights that can be assigned to directors, so certain people are able to have different views of the site when they log on depending on their status (director or member or potential member, for example). There is also an option to sell advertising space to help offset the costs of virtually anything the HISCFA has as an expense. There are accommodations to handle special cases like The Old Club memberships and how those are handled in a bulk manner, and also considerations for publishing (or not) addresses in The Delta News as well as managing summer and winter addresses. **Dennis Szymanski made a motion to commit to a 2-year trial of WildApricot member management software; David Martin seconded.** Neva Covalle asked Harold Stieber whether the HISCFA could afford to pay for this, and Harold confirmed that there is room in the budget. **All in favor; motion carried.**

- **HITA Nominees:** George Covalle announced that of the few people from the survey and a few people that have reached out over email, there are two nominees that have been selected by the HISCFA Board to be presented to the Supervisor and the Township Board. There are also three alternate nominees, should one or more of the primary nominees choose to decline. The primary nominees are Harold Bain and Gary Beulac, and the alternates are Marge Baldwin, Wayne Tornow, and Dennis Szymanski. The following is an excerpt from the HITA Articles of Incorporation regarding appointment to the HITA:

The Harsen's Island Transportation Authority Board shall be comprised of five (5) members appointed by the Governing Body of the Incorporating Political Subdivision. Representation on the Authority Board shall be two members appointed by the Supervisor and approved by the Township Board, two members shall be chosen by the Harsen's Island/St. Clair Flats Improvement Association and approved by the Township Board, one member appointed by the Supervisor with the concurring approval of the Township Board and the Harsen's Island/St. Clair Flats Improvement Association.

**Neva Covalle made a motion to submit two nominees to the HITA Board on behalf of the HISCFA: Harold Bain and Gary Beulac; and three alternates: Marge Baldwin, Wayne Tornow, and Dennis Szymanski; all of which to be approved by the Clay Township Board; David Martin seconded. All in favor; motion carried.** Names will be provided to the Clay Township Supervisor next week.

- **Public Information Meetings:** George Covalle indicated that a suggestion came in to hold a public information meeting: one of the thoughts was for HISCFA to hold a public meeting or two, one of which to be attended by a potential bridge company, and one of which to be attended by Champion Auto Ferry. Ahead of each meeting, the HISCFA would come up with some questions to discuss some of the important items that the public needs answers on, in order to make an informed decision about whether to pursue a bridge or keep the ferry (or both). How does this get done? How is it approved? How is it regulated? These are examples of some potential questions that someone (or some entity) experienced in these issues should be able to answer. The HISCFA doesn't know how long it's going to take the HITA to get going, so in the meantime the HISCFA was looking at what it can do to keep the ball rolling. This would be in parallel with whatever HITA is/will be doing. One note is that HITA will only have authority over Clay Township precinct #4 (Harsen's Island). Perhaps a third meeting would be warranted to allow HITA to provide their thoughts as well.
- **Bonfire and Pig Roast:** September 19, 2020 has been selected for the date for this event.
- **Pond leveling project proposal:** Dennis Szymanski provided the HISCFA Board with a proposal to maintain the level of the pond at Browne's Field going forward, which includes a quotation from DeLude construction to perform the work. Dennis presented a written proposal and some schematics and described the scope of the project, which included a catch basin and directional boring to lead the draining of the



pond ultimately out to the Krispin Drain. This is a similar scenario for what the DNR is using to maintain the levels in the reserve area on the Island. **Dennis Szymanski made a motion to spend \$6,500 maximum to implement a permanent solution to maintain the pond level at Browne's Field; David Martin seconded.** Barbara Crown asked whether the HISCFA will have the money to tackle this project, and Harold Stieber confirmed that it will be possible. **All in favor; motion carried.**

Additional comments from directors or guests:

- ✓ Barbara Crown indicated the Annual Meeting will be on the calendar for August 8, 2020 this year. This is earlier than previous years, but the HISCFA hopes more people will be able to attend since more members will likely be on the Island and/or available seasonally.
- ✓ Jim Neumann commented about meetings that he has been in with the bridge company. Jim stated what they do know is that the bridge company has expressed in erecting a bridge. With a bridge, the company is on a 100-year plan, which means that they expect to be making that money back after 100 years (not immediately). It would be impossible (unaffordable for users) for the bridge company to make their money back within the first 10 years. First, it would have to be commercially viable. They did say that the type of bridge requested by the Coast Guard was a bascule bridge which would allow the bridge to open and close to allow for larger boats to pass through. This type of bridge is extremely expensive to build. The good news is that with HITA, they have the ability to get county, state, and federal funding to assist with the cost of the bridge. This is a huge determining factor over whether or not they would be able to do this bridge. The bridge company also discussed alternative fares for residents or frequent commuters (reduced fare). They know they will make money eventually, but they are looking for generations of payout. They are making money now on bridges they built years ago, and they're also making money on bridges that they have sold off to communities or other companies to handle. Jim stated that he thinks the bridge company should bring together their facts that they have and present their case to the community.
- ✓ Barbara Crown asked whether the HISCFA will be bulk mailing raffle tickets for events this year, and Neva Covalle confirmed that it will be possible with a disclaimer printed at the bottom of each ticket.
- ✓ Craig Baloga mentioned that when Kaltz Construction did the work in the area near the water station, many things were still left to be completed. There are still several items that are left to be completed to spruce up that area. Craig stated that he would be putting together a list of items that needs to be done, and he will form a small team to tackle those tasks.

Next meeting will be on Saturday, March 14, 2020 at **9:30 am** at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall.

**Jerry Thiel made the motion to adjourn; Lois Whipple seconded. All in favor; meeting adjourned at 11:07 am.**

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Most, Recording Secretary

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