



Harsen's Island St. Clair Flats Association

Minutes June 11, 2022

Directors Present: Craig Baloga, Lucy Burby, Jerry Freeman, Steve Gartland, Steve Lawrence, David Martin, Melanie Most, Linda Schoonover, Dennis Szymanski, Jerry Thiel, Leonard Verlinden, Lois Whipple;

Excused: Margaret Marchwinski, Rosemary Wieczorek;

Unexcused: Susan Bryson, Kathy O'Connor, Harold Stieber, Terry Wiggins.

Guests and Members Present: Mike Balan, Pat Binder, Ilene Bischer, Joe Bosy, Artie Bryson, David Bryson, John Darling, John Dickson, Shelly Dickson, Roger Favrow, Sandy Favrow, Brack Ford, Mike Galati, Susan Gerds, Dianne Huber, Doug Kaltz, Chuck Kukawka, Dawn Mead, Chuck Miller, Doreen Miller, Jane Mount, Karen Nihranz, Cindy Pilato, Adam Reinholz, Harold Remlinger, George Rose, Joanne Shirkey.

Craig Baloga brought the meeting to order at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall at 9:02 am with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The May 2022 meeting minutes were presented. **Jerry Thiel made the motion to approve the May 2022 meeting minutes, David Martin seconded to approve; all in favor, motion carried, minutes to be placed on file.**

Executive Committee Reports

Treasurer Report: Lois Whipple presented the May 2022 Treasurer's Report. Lois reported that the balance in the checkbook for May 31, 2022 was \$67,443.97, with total cash on hand being \$143,552.57. Full copies of the monthly Treasurer's Report are available by contacting Harold Stieber at HaroldS@hiscfa.org.

David Martin made the motion to approve the May 2022 treasurer's reports, Leonard Verlinden seconded to approve; all in favor, motion carried, reports to be placed on file.

Secretary Report: Lois Whipple reported on behalf of Margaret Marchwinski that the reminder postcards were sent out about two weeks ago for memberships that are past due. The Delta News is in the final proofing stage and portions have been sent to the printer for layout.

Communications: There were no communications received this month.

Browne's Field: Dennis Szymanski reported that the field is in good shape, and mowing has been taking place regularly now and even some fertilizer has been put down. Dennis indicated that the DPW will be clearing out the material/dirt buildup near the fence after the Island Cleanup Days. The Harsen's Island Militia (H.I.M.) recently had a charity softball game, and Dennis called Tony Mastro over to grade/rake the field and spray for weeds ahead of the event to make the ball diamond presentable. **Dennis Szymanski made a motion to pay Tony Mastro not to exceed \$180 to cover the cost of materials to spray for weeds around Browne's Field; David Martin seconded. All in favor, motion carried.** With the recent rain event that took place, our area experienced about two inches of rain in about an hour. The water was abundant, but the pump seems to be working normally under normal circumstances.



Government Affairs: Lois Whipple reported that the scholarships were passed out at the graduate assembly that was held at Algonac High School last week. A total of \$1.3M in scholarships was received by *all* students of the 2022 AHS graduating class, and a total of \$74,000 was contributed by the community. The HISCFA awarded three Island students \$550 each in scholarships this year: Luke Ciszewicz, Natalie Kapanowski, and Lydia Kukawka.

Guest Speaker, Clay Township Fire Chief George Rose: During the month of May Chief Rose attended one meeting: the Harsen's Island St. Clair Flats Association. The United States Coast Guard had a meeting at the EOC to plan out Jobbie Nooner this year. Chief Rose indicated that he did not attend because he did not receive the email in time for the change of location. He did speak with the Lieutenant from the St. Clair County Sheriff Marine Division and the Coast Guard. The command post will be on land at Tashmoo South Marina; it will not be on the Bristol Bay (on the water) this year.

The CTFD is being asked to deploy the balloons and reserve the portable toilets for this event. They will do some light patrolling at Jobbie Nooner, but not like in years past.

Fire Boat #1 is still not in the water. The CTFD is waiting for an oil pump to come in, and it should be shipped on June 3, 2022. Once they receive it, they will install it on the motor and the boat will be placed into the water.

Utility #2 had some emissions issues where they needed to replace the EGR valve and a particulate matter sensor. Service was done at Bill McDonald Ford in St. Clair.

Chief Rose would like to thank the Garden Club for planting flowers in front of the Island Fire Station. The new tornado sirens are in process but are awaiting some additional electronic components to finish the job. After the July 1st budget comes in, a new color will be selected for painting the outside of the fire station.

Guest Speaker, DNR - John Darling: One of the biggest publications that has been put out there has been about highly-pathogenic avian influenza (A.I. or bird flu), however it is very low risk to human exposure. It has been all over the country and has taken out many chicken operations. The St. Clair Flats area is essentially the epicenter in Michigan for wild birds. John has personally recovered over 100 dead geese, and additionally swans and ducks as well. A.I. came through pretty heavily during the migration and is still lingering, so if you see a goose that is acting really strangely, don't try and help it or touch it. Please call the Island DNR office at **810-748-9504** or email darlingj@michigan.gov to report any unusual wildlife activity. You've probably seen fewer geese this year than in previous years (partially due to A.I.), and a vast majority of those were juvenile birds. There were some adult birds that have succumbed to A.I. - if you see a single adult with a group of goslings, that's probably what has occurred (one of the adults got A.I. and the other one is raising the goslings). As the temperature heats up, the virus doesn't survive in the ecosystem as long. The hotter it gets, the faster it breaks down, so as it warms up during the summer things will dissipate and it won't be so bad. The official State recommendation is to remove bird feeders at this time, and John has not seen an official release about when that is supposed to end. Generally songbirds transmit A.I. less than waterfowl based on how they live. Historically there has been no danger to pets, however it has resulted in the death of several young foxes at this point, and there has been a coyote pup that was confirmed to have it last week.

A biologist was hired to support Macomb and St. Clair counties so that will relieve John Darling of some of his duties in that respect.



It is currently the “open” season (January 2 through August 31) at the refuge, that is: the whole area of the refuge is available for public use. The use of any motorized vehicles (including ATVs and side-by-sides) and bicycles are prohibited in the dyke system. Although the two lots on the South Channel (fishing/parking areas) are under the supervision of the Fisheries Division, John and his team help them out occasionally by putting down gravel there. Both the Snooks launch and the Ames launch areas are technically parks and they are under the supervision of Algonac State Park. Algonac State Park is planning on rebuilding the Snooks launch (near Brown’s Bar) some time this year. It has been on their list to rebuild for a few years now, but was not able to be completed due to the high water. John is working on attempting to take ownership (from Algonac State Park) of the Ames launch area because our Island duck hunters use it more than anyone does. John and his team will also be putting some gravel down on the southernmost launch area on the South Channel, but those were never designed to launch very large boats... but they’re going to do their best to get those back into good shape. That area was only designed to launch 16-ft duck boats, at most. The Fisheries Division doesn’t have any operational maintenance budget to care for the launch, so it’s difficult for them to keep those up. The northernmost area on the South Channel may be graded at some point but no material needs to be added at this point.

As a reminder: January 2 through August 31 the area is open to anyone. September 1 through January 1, permission is required to enter the area. Recreational coyote hunting is ongoing year-round (license required), but residents are permitted to kill coyotes if they are about to do damage. Red foxes are making a really big comeback on the Island right now. Historically, between trapping pressure and coyotes coming to the Island, the foxes were nearly wiped out over the past couple of decades. Coyotes will typically kill foxes on sight, but the red fox has learned that there are not many coyotes living (for example) under people’s decks and whatnot, so the foxes are really finding ways to survive on the Island. Foxes are not allowed to be killed unless they are about to do damage, or outside their hunting season.

The DNR owns just under 3400 acres on the Island: if you think about the upland, dry areas of Harsen’s Island, the DNR owns about one-third, the pheasant farm/golf course is about one-third, and the former Boys Club / Wieczorek property is about one-third. The DNR also oversees around 2000 acres of marsh on top of that. The dykes are mowed usually in very late spring, and they wait as long as possible because of fawns and nesting birds. However, ticks are abundant and it is recommended to check for ticks after walking in the area. Young raccoons are starting to get out and become more mobile, so if you see raccoons out during the day that are displaying atypical tendencies (walking back and forth, spinning/delirious), that raccoon probably has distemper. You can call the office for further instructions about what to do about it.

There was a spring open house recently, organized by the Audubon Society. The next open house will take place on Wednesday October 12th at 6pm (always the Wednesday before opening day of duck season). The refuge will be flooded at that time so there should be a lot of ducks present and available for viewing. The fall open house is geared more towards hunting, so they’ll go over the specifics of what the hunting season looks like, how the draw operates, etc. There are some phenomenal partners with the DNR on the Island: the St. Clair Flats Waterfowlers and Harsen’s Island Waterfowl Hunters, and they put \$40-60k per year towards the operation on the Island. Banding will not take place with volunteers this year due to avian influenza (bird flu), but it is hoped that next year volunteers can be utilized again.

Just to reiterate, as the air temperature and sunlight increases the more the virus breaks down, the less A.I. spreads to the next animal. The actual risk to chicken flocks (especially for backyard breeders) is from humans stepping in infected feces and bringing it into the flock that way. Local farms who sell eggs - the eggs are not at risk. As a precautionary measure, it is recommended to wash the local eggs when they are ready to be eaten. Commercially-bought eggs are treated and are not a risk at all.



UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- *Grant Update:* The HISCFA is still awaiting feedback about a determination on the grant that was recently applied for. The total for the grant request was for \$430,000.
- *Car Show Preparation:* The date for this year's Car Show event is July 16, 2022 from 9am-4pm. Jerry Thiel reported that he received another cash donation. He has a few other donations that are being acquired, as well as 8 rounds of golf to raffle off. Volunteers are still needed for this event - if you are interested in volunteering for any amount of time during this event, please contact CraigB@hiscfa.org. Additionally, the trophies have been received, and the T-shirts have arrived. The design for the shirts are currently being finalized. Several people have pre-registered at this time, but there is still five weeks before this event takes place.
- *Field Day volunteers:* Preparations are underway for Field Day 2022. This event is taking place on Saturday, August 6, 2022 which is 8 weeks from now. There are a few things that still need to be scheduled. Dennis Szymanski volunteered to contact the community service workers to get that organized.
- *Memorial Installation:* Susan Bryson proposed a layout for this memorial installation at Browne's Field. She has a contractor selected and has received a quotation, but still needs some additional funding to complete the task.

NEW BUSINESS

- *The Delta News Completion:* The Delta News will be a little smaller (fewer pages) this year but that helps keep the overall cost of printing similar to previous years. There are a lot of great articles that have been contributed this year and we're looking forward to another great publication.
- *Pickleball/Tennis Courts:* Craig Baloga reported that Flats Epoxy is going to provide a quotation for a surface refinishing on the pickleball/tennis courts. Additionally, there was concern over some possible damage to the courts. The security camera footage was reviewed and there wasn't anything that took place that appeared to be of any concern to the condition of the courts.

Additional comments from directors or guests:

- ✓ Steve Gartland indicated that the new HISCFA.org website is looking great and there's a lot of really good information on there. If you haven't checked it out yet, please take a moment to do so.
- ✓ Past HISCFA director Chuck Kukawka expressed his sympathies to Melanie Most on the passing of her father, and he requested to close the meeting in honor of her father. Theresa Kukawka printed the memorial information and Chuck placed it by the door.
- ✓ Chuck Miller indicated that he had some discussions about an opportunity to work with the DNR on the proposed walking path around the dykes near M-154. Chuck introduced John Darling from the DNR, Harsen's Island field office. John has been on the Island for around 12 years now, and he spoke about how he runs the waterfowl refuge here on the Island and he's responsible for public land planning through St. Clair and Macomb counties. With respect to the proposed walking path, Chuck approached John at the end of April to discuss expanding the walking opportunities along M-154. This discussion led to the possibility of installing a footbridge at the second fishing/access site (on the South Channel, near The Flats) to allow persons to hike on the trails on the dyke system as opposed to the public highway (M-154). Although it is a little outside the scope of what the DNR usually focuses on (e.g. habitat & wildlife), John is in favor of the proposal and indicated he's on board with making it work but there are a few obstacles to overcome with



the State of Michigan prior to its completion. John indicated that there are certain things that can/cannot be allowed on certain properties based on how those properties are funded. An example of some things that would not be allowed are ATVs, horseback riding, and bicycle use. John and Chuck Miller are going to work together to put some costs together for this project moving forward.

Next meeting will be Saturday, July 9, 2022 at **9:00 am** at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall.

Jerry Thiel made the motion to adjourn; Steve Lawrence seconded. All in favor; meeting adjourned at 10:13 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Most, Recording Secretary

MelanieM@hiscfa.org



APPENDIX

Fire Department Incident Reports for Harsen's Island (May 2022)



Clay Township Fire & EMS

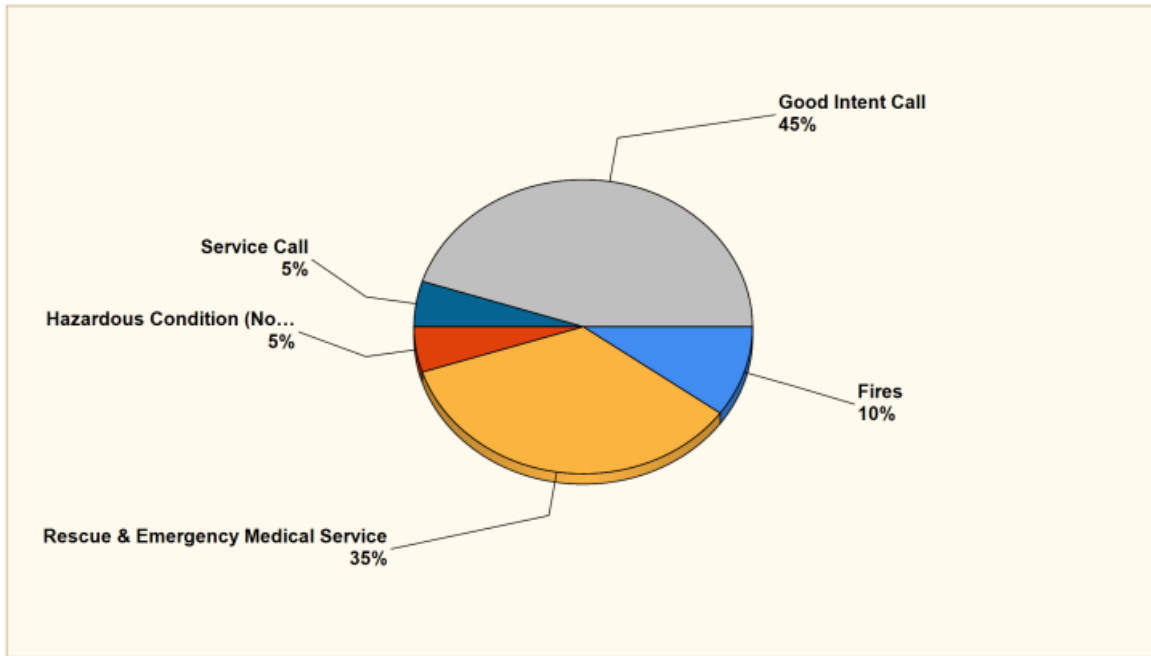
Clay Township, MI

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Breakdown by Major Incident Types for Date Range

Zone(s): 3 - HARSENS ISLAND | Start Date: 05/01/2022 | End Date: 05/31/2022



MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Fires	2	10%
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service	7	35%
Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	1	5%
Service Call	1	5%
Good Intent Call	9	45%
TOTAL	20	100%

Detailed Breakdown by Incident Type		
INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
134 - Water vehicle fire	2	10%
311 - Medical assist, assist EMS crew	2	10%
321 - EMS call, excluding vehicle accident with injury	5	25%
444 - Power line down	1	5%
550 - Public service assistance, other	1	5%
600 - Good intent call, other	1	5%
611 - Dispatched & cancelled en route	1	5%
631 - Authorized controlled burning	7	35%
TOTAL INCIDENTS:	20	100%