



## **Harsen's Island St. Clair Flats Association**

### **Minutes February 11, 2023**

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

**Excused:** Harold Stieber;

**Unexcused:** Susan Bryson, Kathy O'Connor, Terry Wiggins;

**Guests and Members Present:** Artie Bryson, Christine Holcomb, Jim Laethem, Kurt Marchwinski, George Rose, Susan Prior, Kathie Schweikart.

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

The January 2023 meeting minutes were presented. **Lucy Burby made the motion to approve the January 2023 meeting minutes, Steve Lawrence seconded to approve; all in favor, motion carried, minutes to be placed on file.**

#### **Executive Committee Reports**

**Treasurer Report:** Craig Baloga presented the January 2023 Treasurer's Reports. Harold reported that the balance in the checkbook for January 31, 2023 was \$55,959.65 with total cash on hand being \$118,162.79. Full copies of the monthly Treasurer's Report are available by contacting Harold Stieber at [HaroldS@hiscfa.org](mailto:HaroldS@hiscfa.org).

**David Martin made the motion to approve the January 2023 treasurer's reports, Leonard Verlinden seconded to approve; all in favor, motion carried, reports to be placed on file.**

**Secretary Report:** Margaret Marchwinski stated that February is always a busy month. Last week the annual newsletter was sent to the printer. A total of 625 membership packets will be going out in the mail this year. The 2023 advertising flier will be sent out for The Delta News. The Browne's Field lease agreement has been updated in preparation for the 2023 season. All of the clubs and groups that usually contribute to The Delta News have been contacted for their articles. The Reader's Cove has signed on to be a distribution point for handing out physical copies of The Delta News. Additionally, the goal for receiving The Delta News in its printed form is July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023. This is to ensure that members have it earlier in the summer and to provide increased opportunities for members to pick up their copies. All articles need to be submitted by March 31st in order to meet the deadline for printing this year.

**Communications:** Margaret Marchwinski stated that she has received requests from members about membership updates, obituaries, announcements, etc. which have already started rolling in.



Browne's Field: Dennis Szymanski stated that Browne's Field is in need of 2 new flags and a replacement light. The flags are being sent out for repair, if possible, and if not, the HISCFA will purchase replacement flags. The lights are not off-the-shelf items, so they will be ordered.

Government Affairs: Lois Whipple indicated that she has been in touch with Algonac Schools about potential applicants for scholarships for this year. There are two graduating seniors at Algonac High School this year, and their scholarship applications must be submitted by March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- *Grant Update*: There are no new updates about the status of the recent grant application, but details will be shared as soon as something is available.
- *Pavilion Vandalism*: Craig Baloga indicated that the incident is now going to pre-trial on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 10:45am at the St. Clair County Juvenile Court. The HISCFA is able to join the electronic meeting and read a statement if they so choose. This will be reserved for HISCFA President Craig Baloga to attend since he has been in contact with the authorities throughout this process. Craig will report back after the pre-trial takes place.

### NEW BUSINESS

- *Sans Souci Downtown Development*: Susie (Schweikart) Prior brought forward, along with Christine Holcomb, Kathie Schwiekhart (and, not in attendance: Cindy Pilato, Patti Bain and Ashleigh Palescuk), to present a new non-profit organization to help community efforts to provide a sustainable downtown. An introduction statement was read by Susie Prior and can be found in the Appendix of this document. Immediately, SSDI would like to potentially pool resources with the HISCFA; in mid-April 2023, SSDI will invite public figures to the Island to get these people in front of us to learn about our challenges and how they can assist. The tour will conclude with a visit to downtown to get EGLE onboard with the vision of SSDI. At this time it is estimated that the visit will cost about \$500, and SSDI would like to entertain a donation from the HISCFA for this amount. **David Martin made a motion to approve a donation of \$500 to SSDI; Linda Schoonover seconded. All in favor; motion carried.** A question came up about why the mainland (township) DDA was not involved. That DDA covers M-29 from Algonac to Willow Ct. (near St. John's Marsh) and also incorporates Taft Road and Fruit St. The Harsen's Island Sans Souci downtown area cannot be combined with the mainland DDA because it's not contiguous with that area. The township is unable to support a second DDA.

**Guest Speaker, Clay Township Supervisor Artie Bryson**: Supervisor Bryson noted that the Township had an excellent audit report which added funds across the board. The township added monies to every fund balance, and it bonded out the pension liability. At the time, the township had a \$5M liability, but it seemed excessive. The township did some changes over two years, and was able to bond out the liability by purchasing a \$5M bond at 2.5% and invested it which saved \$500,000 in one year. Mark your calendars for May 20-21, 2023 which will be Island Cleanup Days. Additionally, the Sans Souci Block Party will also be held on Saturday, May 20th. There are three bands scheduled and there will be 2 stages: 10 Beach Drive, Dogfish, and the Meldrum Brothers. All non-profit organizations will be invited to participate, and the HISCFA will do the shrimp boil as a fundraiser for this event.



Supervisor Bryson indicated that an aerobic batch plant to grow algae is being looked at for the Island (possibly the first one in Michigan). It's essentially a portable greenhouse on large wheels and will grow algae. The algae will be sold and converted into ink or plastic, and then when the CO<sub>2</sub> turns into O<sub>2</sub>, the township can gain carbon credits to sell on the open market. This process will produce enough carbon credits and algae to pay for the plan itself in 10 years. The nearest one is in southern Indiana, and Supervisor Bryson will go visit it to find out more. Mostly it will run on solar panels and batteries, and requires very little power and maybe 2-4 hours of manpower per week (taking water samples, etc.). These are generally used to sustain an RV park or national parks. The township will need to estimate what sort of flows to expect over the summer or winter, and this project will likely connect the downtown area and then eventually down South Channel as far as it is possible to be gravity-fed (not cost-effective to do a pump station). The estimates are being collected and the cost is still unknown at this time. It sounds like this project could be up and running within a year of being kicked off. This bypasses the local EGLE since this will go through the Health Department, a different department in EGLE than the department that deals with septic issues. This project converts CO<sub>2</sub> into Oxygen, and a big tank will produce different types of bacteria which will eat the solids. Every once in a while the sludge will need to be pumped out and hauled to either farmlands or taken to the wastewater treatment plant. It's very easy to increase capacity on this project because it's modular. Next week, Kevin Hertel and Jay DeBoyer will be coming for a tour of the Island and the Mainland to discuss EGLE's overreach. Two years ago, many of these situations (septic, seawalls, etc.) would have "passed" but are now being denied, even though the law hasn't changed.

A \$2.5M federal grant application for the water line project (including a second feed to Harsen's Island) was successfully awarded to Clay Township. The scope was expanded to include a second phase which includes a water main replacement from Anchor Bay Drive to Ira Township, which was built in the 1930s and is undersized. That will allow Clay Township to connect to the Ira Township water which has their own water station as well. This will provide a redundant system. If something happens at the Algonac plant, the water can be shut off from there and the switch can be flipped to receive water from Ira Township (or vice versa). This will likely get funded around 85-90% based on the parameters of the project. Supervisor Bryson will be seeking another \$1M for that project. There is currently a 50-year contract with Algonac for water which ends in 2 years, and that provides Clay Township with a lot of leverage. There is a likelihood that a Water Authority will need to be created as a result. Clay currently pays for 67% of what goes on in the Algonac water facility, and Clay Township has no ownership or say so. Clay Township took them to court not too long ago, and now Algonac has to get Clay's buy-in for any expense of \$20,000 or over. Because Clay Township has no ownership, it is possible that Algonac could sell to a private entity and Clay would be left with no options. Because Clay Township got this federal money, the Township automatically qualifies for the state revolving fund, which means the Township can borrow money for 1.87% interest. A lot of times, through this fund, these loans can actually be forgiven. In the last 2.5 years, Clay Township has received about \$5M in infrastructure grants.

Clay Township has received a \$3,000 grant for tire recycling, and the township has been in talks with Bud's Garage to be a dropoff location and also to take tires off the rims when necessary. It is being looked at to accommodate a dropoff site year-round, which would bring in approximately \$8,000-\$10,000 in grant monies.

The Township was also awarded the recent Spark Grant (1 of 2 applied for), and there were over 600 applications in 450 communities, of which only 21 were awarded throughout the whole state. The city of Port Huron got one, and Clay Township got the other in St. Clair County. Not one was awarded in neither Macomb nor Oakland counties. It was very competitive. It is a no-match grant for \$584,000, and it will pay for two playscapes which are both going to be pirate ship-themed. The renderings for the plans are posted on social media. It will also include outdoor foosball and chess/checker tables, commercial cornhole games, and three pickleball courts. The existing playscape needs to be repurposed, but that is up to the Clay Township board to decide what to do with it. It is hoped that the board will



vote to repurpose it to Browne's Field, since the HISCFA indicated they would welcome it at Browne's Field. It would cost about \$8,000 to refurbish it, and it is hoped that the only cost to the Association would be the time and effort for the water department to move and transport it to the Island. Also, a new core board will be installed for non-verbal persons at the Clay Township park. The wood chips will be replaced with a rubber surface which is approximately half of the total amount of the grant that has been received. Since the park is part of the Bridge-to-Bay Trail System as a trailhead, there will be a bike repair kiosk available. One grant that was applied for but not received was the grant for the outdoor exercise equipment. There were 17 stations specified in the application, to be placed along the walking path at the Clay Township park. Although this grant was not awarded at this time, there are more rounds to go through. This time, the total grants awarded totaled around \$14.2M, and there will be 2 more rounds at \$25M apiece. Additionally, there are restrooms being built at the Pearl Beach pier, along with new parking lots. Supervisor Bryson is also working on getting an underwater webcam to watch the sturgeon, along with a light to attract the fish. There are further negotiations ongoing at the Harsen's Island nature park, to make some allowances by trading value of the old dump at Columbine and Krispin roads.

**Guest Speaker, Clay Township Fire Chief George Rose:** During the month of January, Chief Rose attended two meetings: the St. Clair Flats Association, and St. Clair County Fire Chief's Association where general business was discussed.

The Marine City Fire Department will be submitting for a regional AFG Grant for turnout gear this year. They asked if the Clay Township fire department would be interested in joining them. Chief Rose indicated that he did submit for 24 complete sets of turnout gear for the department. For reference, it is approximately \$3,000 for the jacket and the pants alone, which does not include the helmet, gloves, boots, hood, etc. They are generally good for 10 years.

All fire department vehicles are in service. The Clay Township Fire Department will need to replace the rear tires on Tango #3 and Engine #4. Fire Boat #1 is still waiting for injectors due to supply chain issues.

Chief Rose would like to replace Fire Boat #1 in the future, and he has been checking on any grants that may be available.

Local resident John Burby has joined the Clay Township Fire Department as a truck mechanic. Three new firefighters have been added to the team. Jonathan Newman is currently employed with the Michigan Air Guard Fire Protection branch at Selfridge at ANGB. Jonathon has Fire Fighter 1 and 2 and is currently enrolled at Macomb Community College EMT Program; James Holmes is currently self-employed and has his own trucking business. James comes to us with a background in firefighting at Highland Park. James is currently enrolled in an EMT class at Tri-Hospital EMS Educational Center; Steven Matthews is currently employed part time as a firefighter at Marysville Fire Department and works at Croswell EMS. Steven has Firefighter 1 and 2 and is a State of Michigan EMT. Steven previously worked at the Clay Township Police department as a dispatcher.

For the emergency sirens: the ones on Little Road & Stewart Road and the one on Golf Course Road have been activated. The one on South Channel has yet to be activated. Because the location for the property on Voakes Rd. was purchased with federal funds, it has to go through some different channels to get that one successfully online. In the meantime, another location will be sourced in the event that it is impossible to proceed with the location originally identified on Voakes Rd. There will be a total of 9 emergency sirens in the township.



Chief Rose displayed one of the AED trainers to the group in attendance today. Chief Rose also mentioned that the ISO (fire insurance) report came in, and the Clay Township fire department remains a 5/5X (did not go down). There are some improvements that we'll see next time when the investigations/inspections take place due to the water line project. Additionally, there is a new fire inspector that will inspect some of the business and that will also help the report for next time.

The new swim platform is still available for the HISCFA to take over, to replace the one that is currently in the pond at Browne's Field.

Additional comments from directors or guests:

- ✓ The SSDI thanked the HISCFA for allowing them to come and speak to the group. Craig Baloga mentioned that the SSDI should reach out with ideas in the future.

Next meeting will be Saturday, March 11, 2023 at **9:30 am** at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall.

**David Martin made the motion to adjourn; Steve Lawrence seconded. All in favor; meeting adjourned at 10:55 am.**

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Most, Recording Secretary

[MelanieM@hiscfa.org](mailto:MelanieM@hiscfa.org)



## APPENDIX

Fire Department Incident Reports for Harsen's Island (January 2023)

Introduction Letter from SSDI (Sans Souci Downtown, Inc.)



# Clay Township Fire & EMS

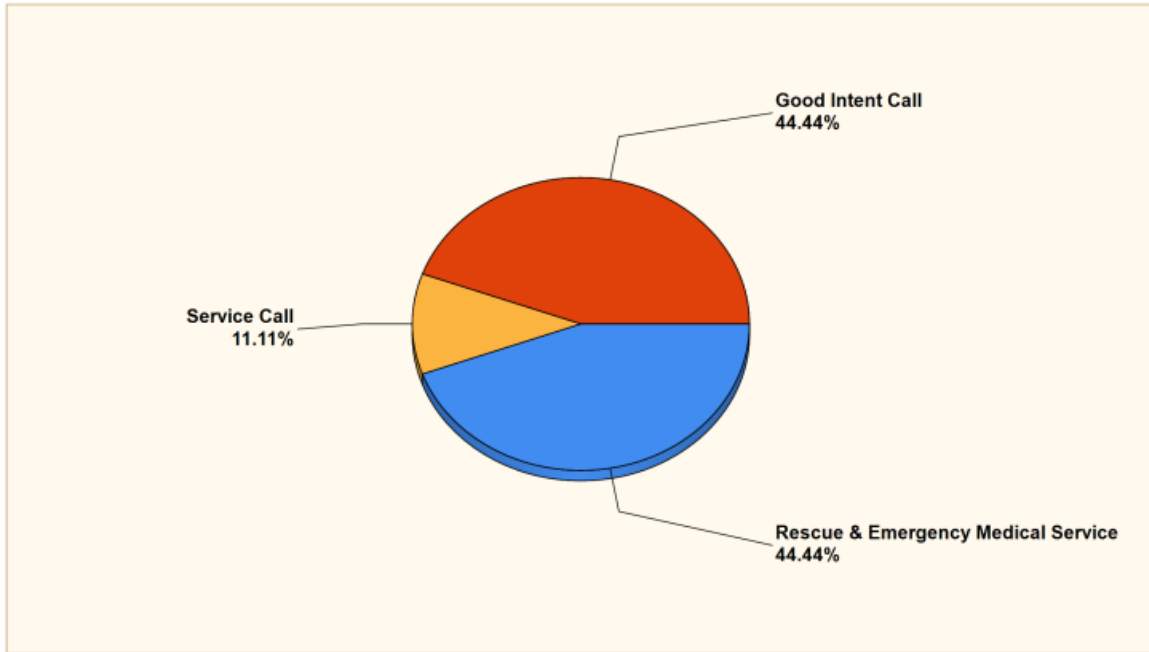
Clay Township, MI

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## Breakdown by Major Incident Types for Date Range

Zone(s): 3 - HARSENS ISLAND | Start Date: 01/01/2023 | End Date: 01/31/2023



MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service	4	44.44%
Service Call	1	11.11%
Good Intent Call	4	44.44%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>

Detailed Breakdown by Incident Type		
INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
321 - EMS call, excluding vehicle accident with injury	4	44.44%
561 - Unauthorized burning	1	11.11%
611 - Dispatched & cancelled en route	1	11.11%
631 - Authorized controlled burning	3	33.33%
<b>TOTAL INCIDENTS:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Introduction Letter from SSDI (Sans Souci Downtown, Inc.)

**Good morning, everyone!** Having been raised on the island myself I see a handful of familiar faces, but for those who don't me, my name is Susie Prior.

I, along with a few other members, wanted to join today's meeting to introduce you to our newly founded volunteer organization called S.S. Downtown, Inc – SSDI for short.

- Two members are here with me today – Christine Holcomb & Kathie Schweikart
- Three others were not able to attend – Cindy Pilato, Patty Bain, Ashleigh Palescuk

**Our mission statement is simple**, "...support community efforts to create a thriving and sustainable downtown that serves all members of our community."

### **About Us/How We Started:**

-Those of us who've been on the island for a while have witnessed the steady decline of business, particularly in the past 15 years. However, in the most recent couple years we have seen the beginnings of a renewed interest with "island life." Not just as a place for a summer vacation cottage, but as a place to raise families and bring new business. One of the most recent additions to Sans Souci is The Island Grind, which has been a great new staple in town.

Following that lead, my parents along with their business partners, purchased Sans Souci Bar with the hopes of bringing a long-standing institution back to life. Trying to be the good daughter that I am, and witnessing the success in nearby Marine City, I started a deep dive down an internet rabbit-hole, researching grant-based funding opportunities that are focused on rehabilitating blighted, obsolete, or historic spaces. I quickly learned that private individuals/businesses are just not eligible to apply for most of the funding opportunities out there. Applications often need to come directly from local governments, or non-profits working in conjunction with local government. At that point, unfortunately the Sans Souci Bar partners I said "sorry, you're on your own."

After redirecting my focus towards how to help the community at large, and speaking with other like-minded islanders, it became clear that an organization dedicated to community development was the first step. It would position us for eligibility of the large grant-based funding opportunities out there; and a non-profit seemed like the best route. A few of us started meeting regularly and SS Downtown, Inc. was formed.

Early discussions at our meetings included questions like: *How can we run with this momentum we are feeling, how do we keep it going? What can **we** do to help new/existing businesses overcome the challenges unique to our area? What does the island look like 5 years from now, 10 years, 20 years?" And, most importantly, "What do **we**, the island community, want it to look like?"*

There's no doubt that summer vacationers & tourism revenue are crucial for the financial success of island business. But SSDI believes the key to long-term sustainability is by **reestablishing** our "core." And





what we mean by that is the strong sense of community and neighborly feeling people get when they are here – it's what draws them in and keeps them coming back. People want to feel connected, feel like they belong. My parents' generation, and generations prior, did so well at creating the "thing" that makes the island so great and we feel it's our responsibility to keep that going.

To do that we need to bring stores, shops, restaurants, and basic services **back** to the island. Those are the things that influence peoples' decisions on where to plant roots. We want to encourage families and individuals to make the island their home and be invested in the community. Us Islanders often get scared by talks of "redevelopment or revitalizations" out of fear that change will somehow ruin this amazing place we live. But the reality is these things WERE here before. Change happens and will continue to happen, it unavoidable. What we can do is lead the type of change we want to see through responsible re-development.

There are several well-established community focused groups on the island already – HISCFCA included. And we recognize how HISCFCA has always worked so diligently on behalf of the island, and by potentially working together and pooling resources and knowledge we may find opportunities to further the community agenda.

### **What is our DIRECTION/AGENDA?**

Immediate Focus: as our name implies. downtown Sans Souci

1. Infrastructure, specifically
  - a) Septic/wastewater handling
    - SSB operates a pump-and-haul system, inefficient and costly
    - Remaining businesses are limited by existing septic system (space & cost)
    - SSB Partners 4 nearby parcels with hopes of a community septic for all downtown businesses
      - Clay Twp & SCC both support this "fix"
      - EGLE has (unofficially) rejected this suggestion
  - b) Parking
    - Township rules/regulations via planning commission by business type
    - Will be issue

Long-term Focus:

2. Focus on identifying and securing funding opportunities that benefit the entire island community

### **HOW do we address our immediate focus?**

For starters, we've planned an event to invite Public Figures for an Island Visit:

3. Mid-April
4. Luncheon w/Presentation, including the history of the island, and current challenges we face
5. Driving Tour
6. Downtown w/Refreshments – opportunity to explore the businesses
7. Ask for help:



- o EGLE Roadblock
- o Special law
- o Funding

As with everything, the Island Visit costs money. All in - including lunch, van rental, and refreshments we anticipate costs to be around \$500.00. SSDI is still in its infancy, so we are looking for additional sponsors at this time.

Our hope is that the Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Association would like to support our cause and consider being one of the sponsors for the event. If HISCFA needs time to discuss the possibility of sponsorship, we understand. Craig and Harold have my contact information and can let me know either way.

If anyone else would like our contact information to stay informed about what we are working on, let me know.

I appreciate your time today and we look forward to working together.