



Harsen's Island St. Clair Flats Association

Minutes October 14, 2023

Directors Present: Craig Baloga, Steve Gartland, Steve Lawrence, Margaret Marchwinski, Melanie Most, Linda Schoonover, Harold Stieber, Dennis Szymanski, Leonard Verlinden, Lois Whipple;

Excused: Lucy Burby;

Unexcused: Susan Bryson, David Martin, Jerry Freeman, Kathy O'Connor, Terry Wiggins;

Guests and Members Present: Harold Bain, Maureen Boury, Artie Bryson, David Bryson, Jacob Bryson, Kathy Harrison, Christine Holcomb, Rich Holcomb, Bruce Ingram, Heather Ingram, Chuck Kukawka, Karen Nihranz, Susie Prior, George Rose, Kathie Schwiebart, Whitey Simon, Rich Sullivan.

Craig Baloga brought the meeting to order at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall at 9:00 am with the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Executive Committee Reports

Treasurer Report: Harold Stieber presented the September 2023 Treasurer's Reports. Harold reported that the balance in the checkbook for September 30, 2023 was \$45,271.71 with total cash on hand being \$114,658.53. Full copies of the monthly Treasurer's Report are available by contacting Harold Stieber at HaroldS@hiscfa.org.

Steve Lawrence made the motion to approve the September 2023 treasurer's reports, Dennis Szymanski seconded to approve; all in favor, motion carried, reports to be placed on file.

Secretary Report: Margaret Marchwinski reported that the HISCFA received one new membership this month. General membership duties are taking place in order to ensure a smooth handoff to the new Executive Secretary, when that person is named. Any person(s) interested in taking on the Executive Secretary position can talk to any current HISCFA director for more information. This is a critical role for the HISCFA, so the directors are asking anyone even remotely interested to please come forward.

Communications: There were no official communications received this month.

Browne's Field: Dennis Szymanski stated many tree limbs and branches were removed from the first 400 feet of the fenceline at Browne's Field. It is loaded with poison ivy, so it will be treated in the future. For the pavilion, the proposal was that the bottom section would be removed and replaced with composite material, covered with Tyvek, install a new window, and side it. The pavilion needs to be treated for ants: they are both inside and outside the structure, including a large anthill inside the storage area. This is an issue both in the summer months and also the winter.



For the walking path at Browne's Field, the only contractor that can support this endeavor for the underlayment is Grosso Trucking, but the asphalt millings are of minimal abundance this time of year. A quotation needs to be obtained from Grosso about how many loads would need to be brought over (approximately 46 loads) and then would need to pay ferry fees on top of that - that cost is currently undetermined at this moment.

Dennis indicated that on/around November 1st, the Bates Cut water station will be winterized, as well as the outside taps at the main water station.

Government Affairs: Lois Whipple reported that the Great Lakes Governors & Premiers organization have initiated the 100% Great Lakes Fish campaign. This campaign seeks to identify uses for all parts of the fish and to foster collaboration between processors, producers and other fishery-adjacent businesses to explore and implement innovative applications for fish byproducts. If you would like more information about this initiative, you can find that information here: <https://gsgp.org/media/gmnlk0gt/7e-gsgp-great-lakes-fish-pledge-with-logos.pdf> Lois also noted that cruise ship activity in the Great Lakes has increased approximately 14% this year.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- *Walking Path Status:* Harold Stieber reached out to three different companies for the finished surface of the walking path. The committee will discuss this issue soon.
- *2023 Executive Board Ballots:* The Executive Board needs to be reelected, so a ballot needs to be put together to reelect the positions of Executive Secretary (currently held by Margaret Marchwinski), and Executive Treasurer (currently held by Harold Stieber). Additionally, the rest of the Executive Board will require reelection if they are choosing to run again. An email will be sent by the Executive Secretary about reestablishing the Executive Board.

NEW BUSINESS

- *Water Station Roof Replacement Status:* There was an issue with the work done on the main water station recently. The owner of the company left one of his employees to do the work when the owner got called away from the HISCFA job, but the work done by the employee was subpar. The owner apologized and wants to make it right, but the HISCFA has requested a refund, which is complicated since funds were already sent for materials. The HISCFA intends on getting a refund for the work, parting ways with the company, and going with someone else. In the meantime, two other quotations have been received to do this complete work and the committee will discuss this matter to find a resolution. Between the two quotations (Good Ol' Boys and Alex Bugg Construction), **Linda Schoonover made a motion to select Good Ol' Boys to complete the work; Dennis Szymanski seconded.** Discussion took place that concluded with the fact that pursuing completion of the project with Good Ol' Boys was dependent on getting a significant amount of the money back from the original contractor before proceeding with them. **All in favor; motion carried.**
- *Golf Cart Battery:* The golf cart at Browne's Field recently experienced an issue where one of the batteries failed. The batteries were only purchased approximately 2-3 years ago, so the Association will dig into this issue to see whether it can be warrantied at all. Craig looked into either procuring a gasoline-powered golf cart, or possibly switching the type of battery that the golf cart requires. Jim Stieber noted that if the type of battery changes, a new charger will also need to be purchased. Discussion took place whether or not to



replace only the batteries or the entire cart altogether. It was decided to do more research on the purchase history to see which makes the most sense financially in the long term.

Guest Speaker, Clay Township Supervisor Artie Bryson: Supervisor Bryson noted that the roadway fog layer was recently completed on Bates Hwy, Golf Course Rd., North Channel Dr., and Middle Channel Dr.. Half of the ditching job was completed on LaCroix; the remainder of the project will be completed next year. The water line on Columbine will be extended by approximately three houses, including 1200 linear feet where the future nature park is planned and should start in about a week or two. A lot of the engineering work is being done about replacing the water lines on the mainland including a second feed to the Island. The bid documents are expected in 4-6 months, and Supervisor Bryson is hoping to get some funds to complete this job. Approximately \$3.5M in grants are expected. The algae plant is in negotiations with EGLE about flood mitigation, which is really the only thing that is left up in the air. They are looking at doing a habitat restoration area of around 10 acres, and the township is looking at the property along the Krispin Drain, west of M-154 at the turn where the big tube / bridge is located near the Schoolhouse. The landowner agreed to provide land for this purpose at no cost. Topography and surveys would need to take place first, and then eradicating all the phragmites (taking approximately 2 years) then subsequent planting of native grasses and white orchids and also pollinating blooms for butterflies. Surveying is currently taking place, and a proposal will need to be put together for EGLE to approve before any of that proposed work begins. In another area, permits are being submitted for the discharge for the algae plant. Once that is complete, the township will have a better idea of how to design the plant. The township is also working with the department of treasury to secure the \$2M that was granted to the township for the algae plant. There is a concern for price increases on these types of projects, so the desire is to pre-purchase some of these items to avoid a possible increase in price. It is estimated that there may be as high as a 10% price increase if the purchase takes place at a later date. Cindy Pilato indicated that two sections of the road near Cottage Lane have lifted just after the road was completed. Supervisor Bryson will speak to the road commission about it. Linda Schoonover asked whether the township would consider working with Friends of the St. Clair River for the procurement of the native plant species project at the Krispin Drain. Linda Schoonover also asked whether she would need to move her garbage cans and caged enclosure when that project takes place next year, and Supervisor Bryson indicated she might need to move them temporarily, but will likely be able to return them to their semi-permanent location once the project is complete.

Guest Speaker, Clay Township Fire Chief George Rose: During the month of September, Chief Rose attended two meetings: the St. Clair Flats Association and the St. Clair County Fire Chiefs Association: he will be on the MABIS Committee, which is a mutual aid committee for statewide fire departments. The fire department participated in two parades: the Peter Henkel Boat Parade and the Harsens Island Lions Club Parade. The Fire Fighters Association had their pancake breakfast, and its turnout was outstanding.

Chief Rose also attended the MTA (Michigan Township Association) for an emergency services seminar in Frankenmuth. Some of the guest speakers were Michigan EMS Programs Manager Emily Baker, Michigan State Fire Marshal Kevin Sehlmeier, Fire Chief Bill Forbush. The Presque Isle Township Fire Department briefed us on updates on Part-74.

Chief Rose attended a class in Muskegon on Marine Firefighting for Land-Based Firefighters. Some of the topics covered how to locate the ships' fire pre-plan and how to read them, how to set up a water supply on a lake freighter, the construction and layout of a large lake vessel, and some of the fire protection systems on the large lake vessel.



Pump Testing was completed in September on all department fire vehicles with pumps, and all have passed their test. All fire department vehicles are in service and both stations are manned. Additionally, a quilt block was placed on the fire station on Harsen's Island to join the St. Clair County Quilt Trail. Finally, a \$10,000 grant was recently received which is planned to be used for personal protective equipment, air masks, and thermal imaging cameras. All of the defibrillators are installed with the exception of the one to be installed at Browne's Field, which will be targeted for implementation next spring.

Additional comments from directors or guests:

- ✓ **Linda Schoonover made a motion to donate \$100 to the Clay Township Firefighters Association, where the money will stay 100% on the Island; Dennis Szymanski seconded. All in favor; motion carried.**
- ✓ Linda Schoonover recognized Melanie Most for her contributions to the Island by publishing The Flyer every week during the summer months. Linda also stated that she was so excited to see Melanie on the cover of Blue Water Woman magazine for the Summer 2023 issue.
- ✓ Cindy Pilato indicated that the Sans Souci Downtown Inc. (SSDI) organization is excited about the Chili Cook-Off this evening, and they appreciate all the support they are receiving about the revitalization of the downtown Sans Souci area. They also noted that the Algaewheel plant is going to open many opportunities for the downtown area going forward. The SSDI would like to install some exterior outlets on some of the buildings in the downtown area, so if anyone has any electrical skills that can assist with this project, please reach out to Cindy Pilato at cindy.pilato@gmail.com or 734-718-8192
- ✓ Kathy Schweikart was asked about the status of the Sans Souci Bar. She indicated that some final inspections are coming up after 5pm Monday. The kitchen has been a challenge to get completed and through inspections because of the specific nature of the types of systems being included and the skilled trades required to complete them. Bar ownership is relying on experts of the systems being installed to ensure that those systems are being installed correctly for the best possible outcome for years to come.
- ✓ Linda Schoonover asked what was going on at the ferry, since the owners of the ferry were present at today's meeting. Maureen Boury and Harold Bain read a prepared statement to address the community, which can be found in the Appendix of this document.
- ✓ David Bryson indicated that there are three things he wishes to cover at this meeting today. First is that Champion's Auto Ferry has attended a port security meeting in downtown Detroit with the USCG, FBI, and CIA, and due to recent events elsewhere in the world, they are very concerned about our Southeastern Michigan area because of having the largest Muslim population in the US. They have many plans for the Island in case things get worse and human smuggling becomes a problem. Champion's Auto Ferry has successfully resisted having armed guards on the boats and arming the pilots and deckhands, but if things persist and worsen significantly, that will be next on their list to execute. Second is to clarify the Sugar Island and all of the EUPTA ferries' actual prices of \$20 per car and extra fees per additional passenger. Around 70% of their business is tourists who are paying the high dollar amounts, and only residents are provided a lower rate. Although those ferries do get a 50% subsidy, they have to give it up because they are obligated to provide a 50% senior citizen discount to everybody and that money doesn't get to their bottom line. Finally, the third thing is that the progress on the ferry docks is slow at the moment due to supply chain issues. They are expecting to complete the dock raising/lowering equipment in the next month or two. The grating will be installed this winter, and the skidways and spiles will be updated in the winter or spring.



After the road is worked on and street lights are installed, the new dock is expected to be in operation by the middle spring 2024 after the road is paved.

Next meeting will be Saturday, November 11, 2023 at **9:00 am** at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall.

Steve Lawrence made the motion to adjourn; Linda Schoonover seconded. All in favor; meeting adjourned at 10:03 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Most, Recording Secretary

MelanieM@hiscfa.org



APPENDIX

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

Prepared statement by Clay Township Trustee Maureen Boury and Harold Bain



Clay Township Fire & EMS

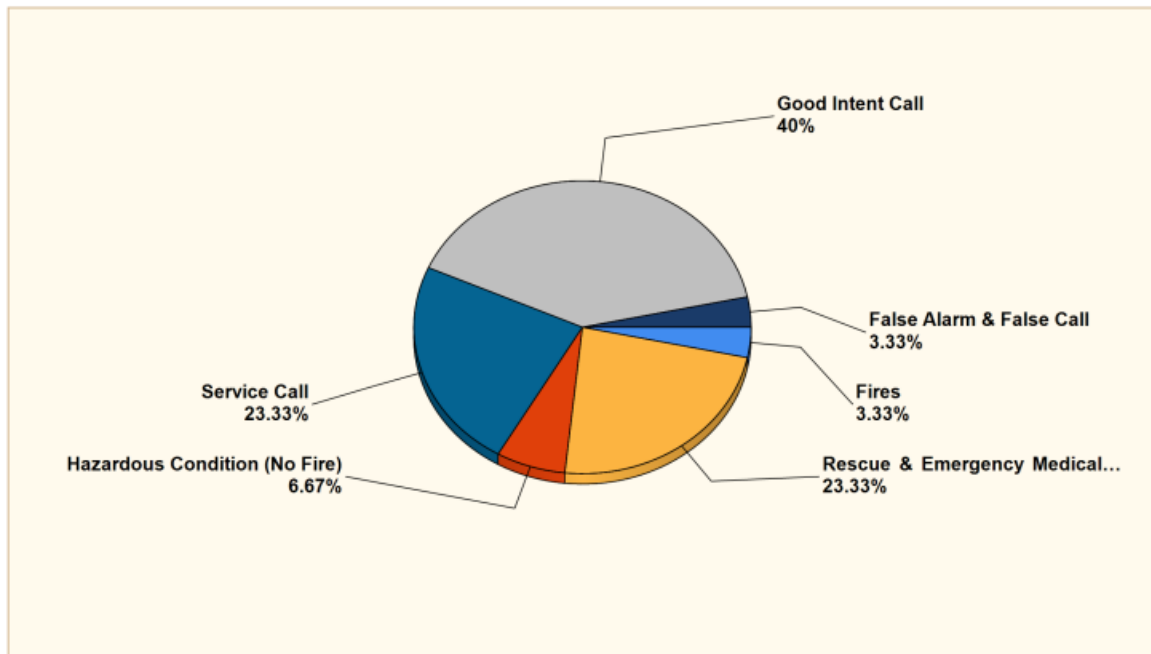
Clay Township, MI

This report was generated on 10/11/2023 8:43:58 AM



Breakdown by Major Incident Types for Date Range

Zone(s): 3 - HARSENS ISLAND | Start Date: 09/01/2023 | End Date: 09/30/2023



MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Fires	1	3.33%
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service	7	23.33%
Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	2	6.67%
Service Call	7	23.33%
Good Intent Call	12	40%
False Alarm & False Call	1	3.33%
TOTAL	30	100%

Detailed Breakdown by Incident Type		
INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
131 - Passenger vehicle fire	1	3.33%
311 - Medical assist, assist EMS crew	2	6.67%
321 - EMS call, excluding vehicle accident with injury	5	16.67%
444 - Power line down	2	6.67%
500 - Service Call, other	2	6.67%
551 - Assist police or other governmental agency	2	6.67%
554 - Assist invalid	1	3.33%
571 - Cover assignment, standby, moveup	2	6.67%
600 - Good intent call, other	1	3.33%
631 - Authorized controlled burning	11	36.67%
735 - Alarm system sounded due to malfunction	1	3.33%
TOTAL INCIDENTS:	30	100%



I'm Maureen Boury. Thank you for electing me as Clay Twp Trustee in 2020. I wanted to get involved and serve our community. I commend the Harsens's Island St. Clair Flats Association board volunteering here and all of their hard work, effort and involvement to make our Island better! I'm also delighted to see so many supporters and residents here staying informed and getting involved! It really does make a difference to those who serve & volunteer their time. As a trustee I see many situations that concern me, from spending to environmental issues and accountability in reporting of all the facts. Our Island is truly special, and I constantly fight for us to get the same services and attention as the mainland for our tax dollars. You may have seen some posts on social media from a mainland resident who is questioning the Clay Township Board on many issues and making the public aware of happenings. I can share his posts with anyone who may want to see them. Unfortunately, his candid opinions and sharing of facts from the meetings with the community is the exception and not the rule. He is truly surprised that more people are not speaking out, when so many issues are clearly affecting all of us, many remain complacent or intimidated and keep quiet but I am hoping that will change. I've learned the percentage of people that need to get involved to put pressure on a governing body is only 8%! That's right, if just 8% of Clay would get involved, ask questions, and speak out many things could be improved. So please be one of the 8% and recruit some friends. Just like attending these meetings, please attend the Clay Twp meetings on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month at 6 PM. Make a night of it, maybe go out to dinner & yes bring friends & neighbors. As you know, HITA has been working hard too, trying to get alternative transportation that is safe, reliable, and affordable. We all REALLY need this, but the politicians are not supporting this cause. The only way to make this happen is to speak out, ask for what you want and put a little pressure on them. Look what SSDI has accomplished by putting pressure on politicians! Anyway, I just wanted to come here today and share my hopes and vision for our special community and make you all aware of what is happening so you can be one of the 8%. It's a worthy cause & worth the effort so if you can, come on Monday the 16th and also to future meetings... Bring a friend... make a night of it. Thanks!

So I think you all know me, Harold Bain – Chairman of Harsens Island Transportation Authority. Just to piggyback off what Maureen said, we appreciate your attendance and support at our meetings also. HITA has come to a crucial point. Planning for an alternative ferry is well underway and we have spent an enormous amount of time on many tasks to accomplish this. We were able to get funding initially of \$250,000 from Gary Eisen and Dan Lauwers which we have spent wisely! We have an option to purchase property, we have partnerships with other Ferry operators like EUPTA (upper peninsula transportation authority). They have shared operating expenses, blueprints for building docks and have agreed to help us in any way needed. We have done traffic surveys revealing what is needed to run this operation and what revenues will be generated. With subsidies that are offered to ferry operations we know our rates would be much lower than what we are paying now. We met with many politicians sharing our project and vision. We have made partnerships with MDOT, Blue Water, SEMCOG and private investors. All of this has been voluntary work to help us bring this island back to life and make sure safety is paramount. Now when we are so close we have come to a crossroads. The \$250,000 is not enough to complete the initial steps needed to get everything underway. Our grant writer requested a grant to complete the planning portion including the feasibility study, which is needed to get the dollars to complete the project. The Democrats in the Senate approved it, but our Republicans in the House rejected it. Our grant writer has suspended her work with HITA. She claims without more community support and local political support no more funding will be granted - which is matching funds. So it's up to us now. Do we give up or do we find a way and fight!?! Our Board has a plan. We are working diligently to put it all together. We will share everything at our next meeting on November 11th. This will be our most important meeting. Please attend to learn what will be necessary and spread the word to any islanders you know. Then it will be up to the community to decide what happens next.