



## Harsen's Island St. Clair Flats Association

### Minutes November 11, 2023

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

**Excused:** Margaret Marchwinski;

**Unexcused:** Jerry Freeman, Kathy O'Connor, Terry Wiggins;

**Guests and Members Present:** Joe Bosy, Artie Bryson, Gordon Couture, John Dickson, Emily Dluge, Roger Favrow, Thomas French, Beth Forton, Mike Galati, Kathy Harrison, Thomas Hellstrom, Jane Mount, Karen Nihranz, Cindy Pilato, Susan Prior, George Rose, Rob Sattler, Andrea Seifferlein, Larry Seifferlein, Jim Stieber, Mark Williams, Stacy Williams.

Craig Baloga brought the meeting to order at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall at 9:02 am with the Pledge of Allegiance. Craig pointed out that today is Veteran's Day and he hopes that everyone will find a way to honor veterans at some point today.

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

#### Executive Committee Reports

**Treasurer Report:** Harold Stieber presented the October 2023 Treasurer's Reports. Harold reported that the balance in the checkbook for October 31, 2023 was \$39,508.67 with total cash on hand being \$106,192.67. Project Control Engineering (PCE) has been paid a retainer for the upcoming work they will be doing on professionally detailing the plans for the upcoming walking path at Browne's Field. For the proposed permanent restrooms facility, a donation of \$3,000 has been received from the South Channel Foundation. There will be more discussion about this topic under the Unfinished Business portion of the agenda. Full copies of the monthly Treasurer's Report are available by contacting Harold Stieber at [HaroldS@hiscfa.org](mailto:HaroldS@hiscfa.org).

**Linda Schoonover made the motion to approve the October 2023 treasurer's reports, Dennis Szymanski seconded to approve; all in favor, motion carried, reports to be placed on file.**

**Secretary Report:** Margaret Marchwinski was not present at today's meeting to provide any updates.

**Communications:** There were no official communications received this month.

**Browne's Field:** Dennis Szymanski stated that the water station roof has been properly removed and replaced. The previous issue with the original contractor has not yet been fully resolved, but Craig Baloga is working to continue negotiations for a refund. Flats Epoxy fixed the floor in the water station at no cost to the HISCFA. Browne's Field and the outside of the main water station is fully winterized, in addition to the Bates Cut water station. The Browne's Field kitchen also needs to have the mouse issue resolved soon. Everything in the drawers needs to be put in sealed



containers and put away for the season. The door for the kitchen is finally installed. The flagpole lights had an issue earlier this year (noted in the February minutes), but they are again having issues. Dennis Szymanski would like to take action now with the earlier-agreed motion (in February) to spend approximately \$500 to replace the flagpole light which never actually happened. Dennis also pointed out that, as the Browne's Field committee chair, he needs to be included on all decisions that are made with respect to actions taken at Browne's Field both now and in the future. Craig Baloga agreed, and will ensure that Dennis is included on any and all communications with respect to Browne's Field actions.

Government Affairs: Lois Whipple stated there was nothing to report this month.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- *Walking Path Status:* Harold Stieber stated that there was an Executive Board meeting held recently, and it was decided that since the walking path is going to be our next biggest project to be tackled, the Board decided it was necessary to obtain a professional scope of work for this project before official quotations from contractors could be requested. PCE will put together the specifications of the entire project including drains, subsurface, top surface, elevation, etc. to include everything required to properly install the walking path to be enjoyed for years to come. The total for these specs will be \$4,760 for which the HISCFA has provided them a \$2,400 retainer. There is an Islander who has committed \$25,000 towards this project, so it is critical to ensure that this project is done properly. Harold is also speaking with a grant writer to pursue a grant so that matching funds can be obtained to help offset the cost required for this project. Cindy Pilato mentioned that the Sans Souci Downtown, Inc. (SSDI) has spoken recently to Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) specifically about some potential for the downtown area, but that contact discussed additional opportunities for Browne's Field (like the walking path) which is very important to Cindy. There is also some potential funding available for this type of project, and this particular fund is geared specifically towards capital funding projects for community impact. Susan Prior stated that the program through the MEDC is called Public Spaces Community Places, so essentially if you have a project like the walking path that you prefer to use it for, they accept applications on a rolling basis. You pre-apply to the project through the MEDC and if approved you work through an online crowdfunding platform called Patronicity. They give you a period of time to crowdfund half of it and whatever you raise, the PSCP fund will match that and fund the other half. It is also possible to apply for different projects (not just the one). Because of the ongoing relationship between SSDI and MEDC, Susan Prior indicated SSDI would be glad to facilitate a grant application process to work together with the HISCFA to make it happen. Susan Bryson asked what was the approximate funding total allocated for the permanent restrooms project. Harold estimated that there's somewhere around \$70,000 allocated at the moment.
- *2023 Executive Board Ballots:* The 2024 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 was sent by the Executive Secretary about reestablishing the Executive Board. Melanie Most will update social media sites soliciting the general membership for candidates for the current vacancies, as well as vacant committee chairs. The new Executive Board will be elected at the meeting in January 2024.



## **NEW BUSINESS**

- *Dog Leashing on Browne's Field:* There was some discussion on social media recently about whether or not it was mandatory to leash dogs at Browne's Field. The following was posted onto the HISCFA's Facebook page regarding this topic: *Browne's Field & Park is owned & maintained by the Harsen's Island St. Clair Flats Association (HISCFA). The State of Michigan has a dog leash law in place (MCL 287.262) which is also mirrored by local Clay Township ordinances. Since Browne's Field & Park is private property but utilized by the public, the HISCFA urges visitors to utilize caution and common sense when using the property. The HISCFA also encourages the public to adhere to local and state laws and enjoy the property at your own risk.* Additional discussion about the subject took place, and **David Martin made a motion to have additional signs placed on Browne's Field with additional verbiage regarding leashing of dogs, Dennis Szymanski seconded; All in favor, motion carried.**

**Guest Speaker, Clay Township Supervisor Artie Bryson:** Supervisor Bryson stated that a few people called the township this past week about the leash laws and Browne's Field. There are 10-foot leash laws in both the state and the township. Browne's Field is private property, and you must have permission to let your dog off the leash by the property owner. Supervisor Bryson will leave the HISCFA to determine what is best for their property, and will not have a police officer stationed at the field to police the enforcement of the township law.

Regarding the Pearl Beach restrooms, Supervisor Bryson stated that they cost approximately \$120,000 with an additional section on one side to use for storage. Supervisor Bryson commented that the MEDC is not well-funded (perhaps only 10-15% applicants get funded), but he confirmed it is still worth looking into. Supervisor Bryson indicated that he is going to turn up the heat on the State for phragmite control. The State of Michigan owns more than 50% of Clay Township, and over 20% of the township is inundated with phragmites. The State pays nothing towards our township's first responders (police & fire), and phragmites are a huge fire hazard. Supervisor Bryson will be sending some strongly-worded language demanding that the State must do something on Harsen's Island and St. John's Marsh. For some reason, our local DNR can hire and rent a Marshmaster, but they are not permitted to own one and he's not sure why. Supervisor Bryson was going to look into purchasing a Marshmaster so the DNR could rent it from the township. There already exists another agreement where the DNR contributes ~\$15k/year towards insurance and maintenance on the Marshmaster that they rent. The township resolution 2023-34 that was written and published can be found in the Appendix of this document.

The water extension on Columbine was completed, with some landscaping cleanup still left outstanding at the moment. This project probably saved the Township approximately \$50k by doing it in-house, and not many townships are capable of doing that. The Township was trying to get some legislation passed in the state to allow a second Downtown Development Authority (DDA) in Clay Township, specifically for Sans Souci. It would be a huge asset for Sans Souci because it could capture an increase in tax values and the caveat would be that it would have to be spent in the district to prove tax base and infrastructure. The verbiage for the legislation has been written and is ready to go, but it probably won't be put on the floor until spring at best.

The Township is looking at purchasing another fire truck for the Island - a new mini-pumper. The cost is estimated at approximately \$320,000 and it is important to have because it can traverse over smaller bridges whereas the bigger trucks cannot. The Clay Township board has been talking with EGLE about the Algaewheel plant, and EGLE has approved the preliminary process for the plant. In other words, the Township has received the go-ahead to begin building the plant. They also certified our carbon credit capture, so we will be creating certified carbon credits to sell on the open market once the plant is in process. For wetland mitigation for the Algaewheel plant, we have to



do either a habitat restoration on 8 acres, or turn upland of 1.6 acres into wetland. Supervisor Bryson has been looking at sites for either of these options, but he keeps getting turned down because the wetlands need to NOT include phragmites on it. Another potential is to look off the Island but he would prefer to keep it on the Island. There is acreage behind the high school that might work, and it may even qualify for a school project. PCE suggested to take 1.6 acres behind the former bank at Browne's Field (runs adjacent to Art Cook Marine), the HISCFA (who owns that property) would essentially allocate an easement, take off the topsoil, include plantings of pollinating wildflowers and milkweed. etc. and then allow the Township to take over responsibility of this easement, but this issue hasn't been fully discussed with the HISCFA Board yet. It would need to ensure that it would not obstruct the proposed walking path or the existing baseball field. PCE will include investigation of this matter in their upcoming assessment at Browne's Field. The Township is waiting for the DNR to approve their plan to be awarded the trust fund grant for updating the play area for replacement of the playscapes. As soon as the green light is given by the DNR, the bid will go out to remove the playscapes from the Clay Township Park and place them at Browne's Field. The existing playscapes at the Clay Township park will be replaced with new ones. It will even be possible to bring the woodchips from the Township park over to Browne's Field if they are wanted.

Finally, Supervisor Bryson publicly recognized Joanne Shirkey. Joanne has given a lot to our community over the years, and Supervisor Bryson read through a social media post that he placed online recently which honored her lifelong commitment to the communities she touched in her lifetime.

**Guest Speaker, Clay Township Fire Chief George Rose:** During the month of October, Chief Rose attended two meetings: the St. Clair Flats Association, and St. Clair Chief's Communications Committee; general business was discussed and 800 MHz radios and tower infrastructure throughout the county.

October was Fire Prevention Month, and the Clay Township Fire Department conducted classes for Algonac Childcare, Millside Elementary, and Algonquin Elementary, with over 400 children participating regarding safety tips in the home. Chief Rose would like to thank Lt. Carr and Firefighter Paruszkiewicz for giving the classes.

The CTFD participated in the first annual Sans Souci Downtown, Inc. (SSDI) Chili Cook-Off. Thank you Sgt. Devroy and Firefighter Papp. Additionally, the CTFD did a static display at the Stewart Farm Halloween outing, where fire personnel passed out fire hats and candy. They also participated in a static display at the Algonac Lions Club Trunk-or-Treat event. Thank you to Sgt's. Devroy & Matthews and Firefighters Welch and Paruszkiewicz for their participation. The Fire Department did a stand-by at the Pearl Beach Lions annual Halloween Bonfire. Thank you to Firefighters Sutton, Papp, and Paruszkiewicz. Finally, Fire Boat #2 was pulled out for the season and will be stored at Station#1 for the winter. Another part-time employee has been gained: Higgins is an EMT-P (paramedic) and is a township resident. The CTFD has received a \$10,000 firefighters equipment grant from the State of Michigan masks, thermal imaging, and hoods. Chief Rose will be traveling to the west side of the State to go look at a new mini-pumper. The existing mini-pumper that belongs to the township fire department has a manual transmission and cannot be driven by a lot of the newer members of the CTFD.



Additional comments from directors or guests:

- ✓ The HI Lions are hosting Thanksgiving Dinner again this year. Tickets are available at the Sans Souci Market, or you can reach out to Dennis Szymanski directly.
- ✓ The Soup Cookoff is taking place tonight at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall at 6:00pm.
- ✓ SSDI is having their first annual tree and building lighting taking place on Sunday December 3rd at 4:00pm. The buildings will be lit up, there will be caroling, and there will be a Christmas Tree lighting and hot chocolate available.
- ✓ Thomas French proposed to put a food truck on Browne's Field near the advertising sign beginning Memorial Day weekend. He would keep and maintain insurance and perhaps pay a monthly rent. He is in the very early stages of planning how exactly to execute his business, but he would like to serve breakfast and lunch, coffee, juice, etc. each day. It was recommended to him to submit an official business plan to propose to the Board of Directors as a discussion topic for an upcoming agenda item.
- ✓ Linda Schoonover let everyone know there will be a nativity scene on the Algonac Boardwalk on Saturday December 2nd.

Next meeting will be Saturday, January 13, 2024 at **9:30 am** at the Harsen's Island Lions Hall.

**Steve Lawrence made the motion to adjourn; Linda Schoonover seconded. All in favor; meeting adjourned at 10:18 am.**

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Most, Recording Secretary

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



## APPENDIX

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

Clay Township phragmite resolution 2023-34



# Clay Township Fire & EMS

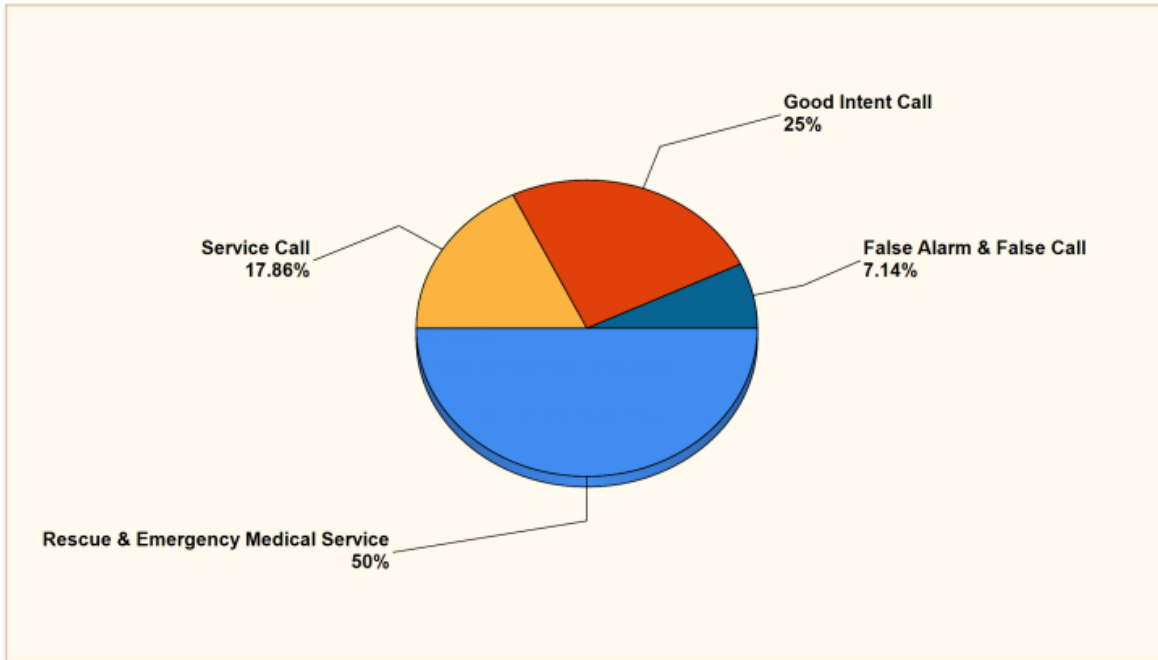
Clay Township, MI

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## Breakdown by Major Incident Types for Date Range

Zone(s): 3 - HARSENS ISLAND | Start Date: 10/01/2023 | End Date: 10/31/2023



MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service	14	50%
Service Call	5	17.86%
Good Intent Call	7	25%
False Alarm & False Call	2	7.14%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>

Detailed Breakdown by Incident Type		
INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
311 - Medical assist, assist EMS crew	3	10.71%
321 - EMS call, excluding vehicle accident with injury	11	39.29%
500 - Service Call, other	2	7.14%
550 - Public service assistance, other	1	3.57%
553 - Public service	1	3.57%
554 - Assist invalid	1	3.57%
611 - Dispatched & cancelled en route	2	7.14%
631 - Authorized controlled burning	5	17.86%
733 - Smoke detector activation due to malfunction	1	3.57%
745 - Alarm system activation, no fire - unintentional	1	3.57%
<b>TOTAL INCIDENTS:</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>100%</b>



TOWNSHIP OF CLAY

4710 POINTE TREMBLE, PO BOX 429 • ALGONAC, MICHIGAN 48001

RESOLUTION 2023-34
DEMAND FOR PHRAGMITES CONTROL
CLAY TOWNSHIP, ST. CLAIR COUNTY

At a regular meeting of the Township Board of Trustees of the Township of Clay, County of St. Clair, State of Michigan, held in the Harsens Island Lions Hall on Monday December 04, 2023 at 6:00 pm with the following in attendance:

PRESENT: J. Arthur Bryson, Supervisor; Cynthia Valentine, Clerk; Krist Hiltunen, Treasurer; Trustees: Chris O'Regan, Jon DeBoyer, Mark Borchardt and Maureen Boury

ABSENT: None

The following preamble and resolution was adopted by Trustee Borchardt, and supported by Trustee O'Regan:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Clay Township is the American side of the largest freshwater delta in the Northern Hemisphere that supports a wide range of natural wildlife which some species are endangered, and

WHEREAS, Phragmites is a non-native, highly aggressive, perennial wetland grass that rapidly outcompetes its native relatives, and

WHEREAS, Phragmites are known to impact multiple wildlife species, from birds to threatened and endangered reptiles and amphibians. Phragmites do not provide habitat for marsh-nesting bird species and support fewer insects that are food for aerial foraging birds than native wetland plants, and

WHEREAS, Over 50% of Clay Township is owned by the State of Michigan, and

WHEREAS, Over 28% of the State-owned property in Clay Township is infested with Phragmites being on Harsens Island, St Johns Marsh (2477 acres), and the Algonac State Park (1450 acres), and

WHEREAS, The State of Michigan has made little to no efforts in controlling the Phragmites in Clay Township in several years, and

WHEREAS, Phragmites are a fire hazard. April 4, 2013, a Phragmites fire on Harsens Island burned over 150 acres. Phragmites fires burn very hot, at temperatures up to 2000 degrees, and generate their own wind, which can quickly expand the fire zone. that vinyl siding and windows on homes 500 feet from the blazes could melt, and

WHEREAS, The State of Michigan pays no funds to Clay Township for Fire or Police protection but is challenged to protect life and property on State land.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, The Township of Clay in St. Clair County is demanding that the State of Michigan controls phragmites on State Properties within the boundaries of Clay Township.

Resolution 2023-34 declared Adopted

Roll Call Vote was as follows:

AYES: J. Arthur Bryson, Supervisor; Cynthia Valentine, Clerk; Krist Hiltunen, Treasurer; Trustees: Chris O'Regan, Jon DeBoyer, Mark Borchardt and Maureen Boury
NAYS:None

Cynthia Valentine signature and name: Cynthia Valentine, Clay Township Clerk

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned Clerk of the Township of Clay, hereby certifies that the foregoing constitutes a true and complete copy of a Resolution adopted by the Clay Township Board of Trustees of the Township of Clay, County of St. Clair, Michigan at a meeting held on December 04, 2023 at which seven (7) members of the Township Board were present and voted as indicated, that said meeting was held in accordance with the Open Meetings Act of the State of Michigan, being Act 267, Public Acts of Michigan, 1976, and that the minutes of said meeting were kept and will be or have been made available as required by said Act.

Cynthia Valentine signature and name: Cynthia Valentine, Clay Township Clerk