



Charter Township of Orion
Parks and Path Advisory Committee
January 20 2022- 6:00 p.m.
Meeting Minutes
Lake Orion Municipal Complex
2323 Joslyn Road., Lake Orion, MI 48360

LEADERSHIP:

CHAIRPERSON: Tom Fisher
VICE-CHAIRPERSON: Jenn Miller
SECRETARY: Kevin Gorman

1. CALL TO ORDER **START TIME** 6:02 pm
 DETERMINATION OF QUORUM (minimum 4 members) Members Present: 10 (1 late)
MOTION BY Tom Fisher **SECOND BY** Julia Dalrymple

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS	Fisher, Tom	Present	Berwick, Jay	Present
	Miller, Jenn	Present	Richards, Jerry	Absent
	Cotter, BC	Present	Pike, Elizabeth	Present
	Gorman, Kevin	Present	Dalrymple, Julia (Board Rep)	Present
	Steele, Donni (Board Rep)	Present	Birney, Brian (Altn. Board Rep)	Absent
	Landis, Mark (OHM – Twp. Engr.)	Present	Whatley, Aaron (P&R Director)	Present
	Patrick Ross	Present		

GUESTS:

3. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES **MOTION BY:** Jenn Miller **SECOND BY:** Julia Dalrymple

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

MOTION BY Elizabeth Pike **SECOND BY** Jenn Miller

5. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON AGENDA ITEMS (3 minute limit per person)

DISCUSSION: (none)

6. Election of Officers

- a. Tom Fisher suggested that the current officers stay in their seats. Current board members only started last fall due to changes, and the suggestion is to keep their positions for the remainder of the year.
 Motion to accept current offers was made by Jay Berwick. Tom Fisher Seconded the motion, all members voted to continue with current leadership.

7. New Business **6:05 PM**

a. Topic of Pocket Parks.

Some suggestions were made to make some of them more attractive. Included in the suggestions were developing rock gardens (keeping in mind height restrictions suggested by law enforcement for visibility reasons). Another suggestion was to develop a Great Lakes water map similar to what Meijer Gardens has developed by Grand Rapids.

b. Future Parks and Safety Paths Meeting Locations:

The suggestion has been made to rotate the meeting locations to other existing park locations

within the Township properties list. One suggestion is to meet at Camp Agawam for the May meeting and possibly make this an "Open House" to see if more of the general public can attend. Friendship Park has been suggested for the next meeting location for March. There will be subcommittee that will work on scheduling the sites as reservations will need to be checked.

c. Parks and Recreational Scholarship discussion:

With the rise in popularity of Lake Orion youth sports leagues such as LOYBL (Lake Orion Youth Baseball League) and OOSL (Orion/Oxford Soccer League), the Parks and Recreation Director (Aaron Whatley) would like to establish a "scholarship" fund that could offer help for lower income residents of the community with the fees associated with the programs. Julia Dalrymple suggested that the school community already maintains a list of qualifying families that receive assistance from the school district and that they could possibly help the Parks and Safety Paths committee create mailing distribution lists to help with this. Julia will report back at the next meeting and work with Aaron on this off-line.

d. Clarkston Road Bid Status

Township Engineer (Mark Landis) discussed updates for Paths along Clarkston Road (retaining wall issue and an issue with board walk along sections).

e. Bicycle Camping Proposal

Jenn Miller introduced a document containing research for the idea of setting up a designated Bike Camping area within the Township's properties. The obvious suggestion is at Camp Agawam. This is a no-reservations, no turn-away proposal in line with a national non-profit organization called "Adventure Cycling Association." See the additional material included at the end of the regular meeting minutes. The idea was enthusiastically received and Tom Fisher will be setting up a subcommittee to explore this concept with Jenn, himself with another volunteer to be named later.

8. Pending Business

Start time: 6:31 pm

a. Safety Paths Update

Updates were discussed, and pending items for the spring were mentioned on items that had not been able to be completed this fall.

i. Safe Routes to Schools Update

- Infrastructure update still being made on Greenshield for a boardwalk
- non-infrastructure items to be address: Department has a couple of years to put safety and educational programs in place

ii. Pending design, bids and construction issues were discussed. Some members expressed appreciation for the relatively snow free core of the paths system.

iii. Long Range plans discussed for the following:

- Joslyn Road
- Heights Road
- Indianwood Rd (including a possible construction near the Polly Ann parking lot)

9. Directors' Reports

Start time: 6:57 pm

Aaron Whatley discussed several on-going items. A special recognition was mentioned for the recent passing way of a 15 year Parks and Recreation Employee (Michael McDonald). Other topics:

a. Buckhorn Lake Boardwalk Bids: have gone out. Boardwalk for a safety path along the east side of the lake bordering Lapeer Road.

b. Pinetree retaining walls

c. Greenshield boardwalk (by "G's Pizza)

d. Remaining Balance to be determined by February will help determine priorities in the spring. This should include some possible additional safety path construction along Indianwood.

10. Organization Reports

- a. **Planning Commission.** Mark Landis discussed updates to some projects, no major new items in process.
- b. **Paint Creek Trail**
There will be National Trails Day event scheduled for Saturday June 4th, 2022 (starting at Children's Park). Vendors/tents/events will be posted as date gets closer. New Equestrian parking lot and rest rooms are almost complete off of Lake Orion Road. On target for spring opening. In addition, bridge at the 33.1 mile marker has been identified as needing repair
- c. **Polly Ann Trail**
Vault rest room will be built by Clarkston Rd, currently no funds for the Lake George Vault rest room at this point.
- d. **Community Events:** Discussed by Patrick Ross (published in township mailings/emails)
- e. **Park Liaison (Bald Mt & County).** State has approval for a new "connector" trail to run parallel to Lake George Rd from the most eastern trail section of Bald Mountain North unit to help keep cyclists off of Lake George Road while traveling between Bald Mountain and the Addison Oaks trail systems. Construction to be complete by mid-March. In addition, plans are in place for obtaining grant money for improvements to the trail system at Bald Mt. south unit along with a small skills trail to be used for Mountain Bicycling skills lessons.

11. Committee Comments

Next meeting location will be announced after reservations are checked at some of the locations.

12. Next Steps

Two subcommittees and memberships will be confirmed at the next regular meeting on March 18th. One team will be working on the Bike Camping proposals and the other will be hopefully confirming location schedule and plans for some of the meetings to be more inclusive of the community in general.

13. Adjournment

End Time: 7:39 pm

Motion made by: Jay Berwick

Second by: Donni Steele

NOTE: following pages are the from the hand out from Jenn Miller on Bike camping

Orion Township Hiker/Biker Camp

One sentence summary: designate a campsite for travelers who arrive by foot or bicycle, or implement a no turn away policy at an existing campground for travelers who arrive by foot or bicycle.

Background

Check out Adventure Cycling Association's (ACA) [Building Bike Tourism](#) page. ACA is *the* bike travel resource in the U.S. This page also includes [Economic Impact](#) analyses with a link to Michigan Department of Transportation's 2014 and 2015 studies looking at Michigan specific impacts.

What is a Hiker/Biker camp?

[ACA's Bicycle Camping Guide](#) has a beautifully laid out overview, but here's the highlights that are applicable to Orion Township:

- It's essentially the same as the no-turn-away policy that Michigan has at their [state campgrounds](#). If you arrive on foot or on a bike you can't be turned away from the campground even if it's full.
- Bike travelers are at the mercy of many outside forces - weather, mechanical issues, illness, etc. Having a last-minute camping option is very important.
- Bikers and hikers are *very* low impact. They usually travel solo or in a small group, and usually have single-person tents. They don't need an official campsite, just a grassy patch to pitch a tent and access to a bathroom.
- Orion Township may limit the policy to a certain number of people (e.g. a tour of 20 needs to reserve a few sites in advance, no turn away does not apply to a group that size).
- Different fees: rather than charging by the site, hiker/biker camps are usually charged per person (~\$5) and are sometimes free.
- *I'd be willing to discuss donating the fee to make our site free for riders.*

Having a Hiker/Biker camp is an *option* for riders. Some riders will still opt to reserve regular campsites in advance. Getting a campground on the maps utilized by riders will get Orion Township on their radar. Even if the hiker/biker camp is rejected, we should still get Camp Agawam on the MDOT bike maps and the Iron Belle Trail map.

Why should Orion Township have a Hiker/Biker camp?

- [Iron Belle Trail](#): I am immensely proud to live in a township that prioritizes recreation, safety paths, trails, and welcomes large-scale state or federal projects like the Iron Belle Trail. Orion Township is 50-60 miles from the Iron Belle terminus - the perfect distance for many overnight riders and long-haul tourers.
- The next campground going north is in Ortonville - an additional 15 miles (out of range for many riders). That camp is a very expensive RV campground something many bike travelers avoid. There aren't any campgrounds south of us that I can find. Orion

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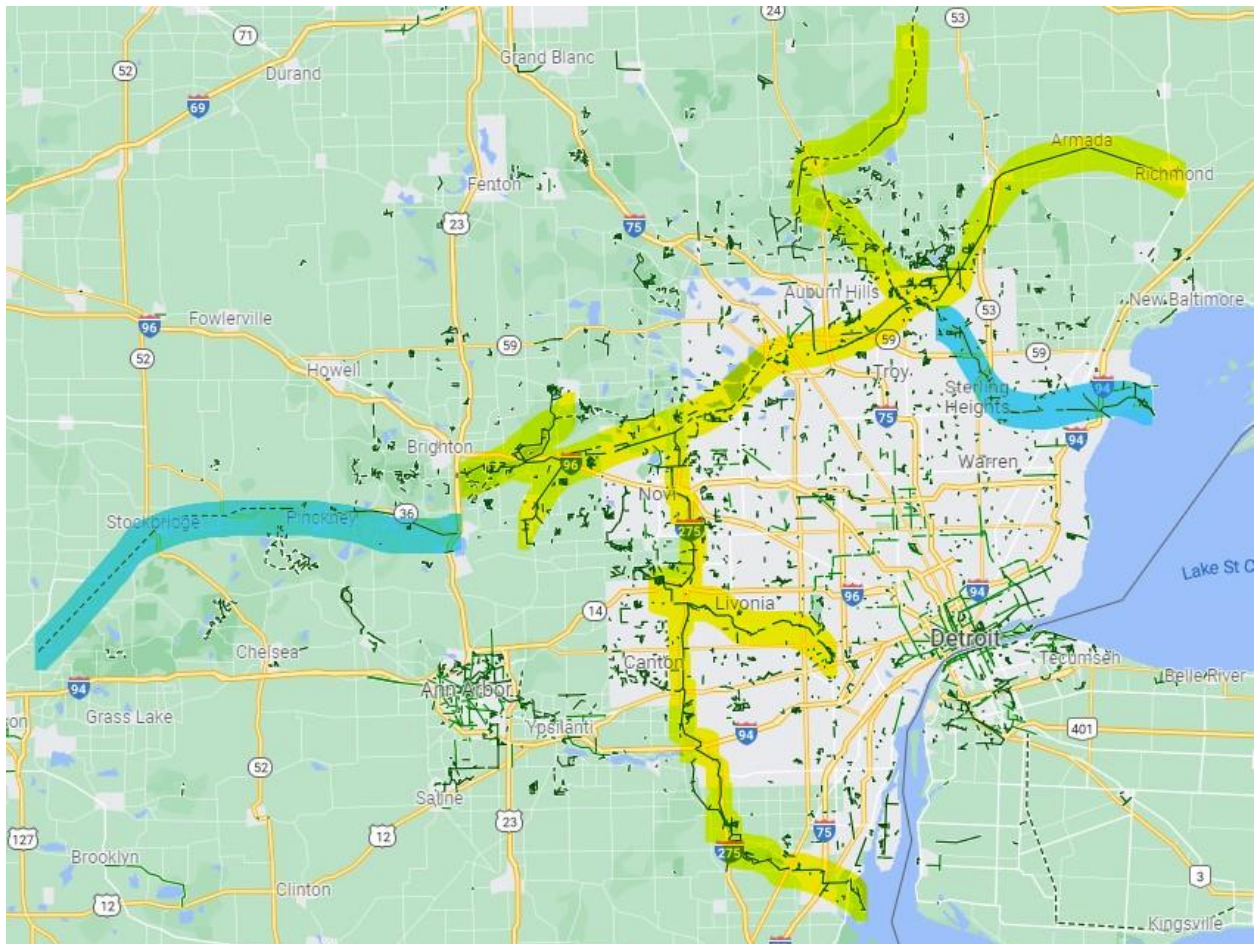
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- The next campground going north is in Ortonville - an additional 15 miles (out of range for many riders). That camp is a very expensive RV campground something many bike travelers avoid. There aren't any campgrounds south of us that I can find. Orion Township is the first campground north of Detroit meaning it'll be a destination for travelers headed in either direction.
- Other campgrounds listed on the Iron Belle map are relatively far off route with few or no food options nearby. Putting a Lake Orion hiker/biker camp on the map would be a sought after destination.

- Network of Rail Trails and Paths (image below): A contiguous network of Rail Trails and bike paths spanning 160 miles (yellow highlight) passes through Orion Township. An additional 65 miles of trails and paths are accessible with short jaunts on a few roads (blue highlight). The span is similar to the Little Miami Scenic Trail in OH which saw over [700,000 visitors in 2014](#). I would not expect quite so many on our trail network Michigan has many more trail options around the state compared to OH, and the Little Miami is completely paved - but it does give a sense of interest in biking around the Midwest.



- The Polly Ann, Paint Creek, and MOT are definitely the most scenic trails of this network making Orion Township an excellent home base for individuals interested in day rides or hikes. In this scenario, individuals would likely reserve a regular campsite in advance, but getting a campground on the maps utilized by riders will get Orion Township on their radar.
- Amtrak's Bike Roll-On Service: All [Michigan Amtrak Lines](#) offer bike roll on service. This is very popular among bike travelers as out-and-back trips can be turned into longer, one-way trips, or loops may be completed or shortened by a train ride. The Wolverine and Blue Water Lines, which start in Chicago, hit the SE MI trail network at Dearborn and Pontiac, and cross the Iron Belle in Detroit and Flint.

Where should the Hiker/Biker camp be?

The obvious choice is Camp Agawam. It's already a campground and it's amazing. There are many open areas that could accommodate last-minute arrivals or large tour groups (large groups would need to request

accommodations in advance). The limitations are lack of showers and lack of electricity (this is important to charge GPS, phones, and bike lights). If it's possible to direct guests to electricity sources they can use, that would be ideal. Taking a swim in the lake is the next best thing when a shower isn't available. If the Township would rather not establish a hiker/biker site at Camp Agawam for any reason, it could really be anywhere with access to a restroom and electricity (Friendship Park, behind Orion Center, etc).

Who uses these sites?

- From the [ACA's Bicycle Camping Guide](#): "According to the Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research (2014) : • 58% of bicycle travelers make over \$75,000 per year • 82% have a college education • 8.1% are international tourists • 52 is the average age"
- From personal experience, tourers are usually in bed by 9PM at the latest and gone by 8AM. Mountain bikers a little later.
- My gut is that the Belle-Iron and our trail/path network will attract riders who highly prioritize safety. I can find sources for this if needed, but more cautious riders generally include novice tourers, women, and families.
- Obviously we're not similar to Montana, but I always liked this video since Bill White covers some of the common concerns from locals and describes what the reality is: <https://youtu.be/tYPL0EjY-u8> If the site is within camp Agawam I don't think anyone would have any of the concerns in the video.

Will it be overrun?

I'd optimistically guess we'd get a couple handfuls of folks using the hiker/biker option a year. We aren't on an ACA route which sees large numbers of riders annually.

The Township wants to establish a hiker/biker site, what do we need to do?

(I am happy to take on all of the following as I know staff is already running full time).

What it entails would depend on what the Township wants to do. My first steps would be:

- Contact ACA to partner up, and ask to get in contact with a similar campground who has implemented a hiker/biker site just to find out what the extra work-load is (if any).
- Get the campground added to biking/hiking maps (MDOT bike maps, Iron Belle, others?) Agawam should be added regardless.
- Add signage (or QR code like the current Park map)
 - Park map (with bike fix it, water, restroom info)
 - Camp info (where do they go, where can they find electricity, where's a shower)
 - Directions to food (restaurant/stores)
 - Drop box for payments/donations

Right now, reserving a site at Agawam is very formal. If it's important to keep some of that formality, you can put a phone number on the maps, sign, and/or website and ask folks to call to find out all the above info. I'd be happy to run point on that line - someone would just need to be a backup.

I would expect use to start slow. The Iron Belle isn't finished, and Orion Township is not along an existing ACA route. I believe establishing a hiker/biker site would demonstrate our welcoming attitude toward riders, possibly get a group in during [Bike Travel Weekend](#), and slowly grow from there. But I imagine it would stay pretty low-key.

DRAFT