

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF VAN BUREN
Environmental Commission
Wednesday, January 20, 2021
MEETING MINUTES

To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, protect the public health, and provide essential protections to Van Buren Township residents; the meeting was called to order by Acting Chairperson DeBuck at 7:02 p.m. via Virtual Meeting:

ROLL CALL:

Present: Norm DeBuck (Acting Chairperson), Peter Creal, Benjamin Ross, and Commissioner Anthony Gibson

Absent: Ronald Merrit II and Trustee Kevin Martin (Board Representative)

Staff: Matthew Best (Public Services Director), Elizabeth Renaud (Executive Assistant), and Deanna Murphy (Recording Secretary)

Additional Present: None.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Moved and seconded by Commissioners Creal and Gibson to approve the January 20, 2021 Environmental Commission Meeting Agenda.

Roll Call Vote: (4) AYES – DeBuck, Creal, Ross, Gibson
(0) NAYS

Motion Carried

APPROVAL OF JULY 15, 2020 MEETING MINUTES:

It was asked to correct the adjournment time of the July 15th meeting from 7:02 PM to 8:02 PM.

Moved and seconded by Commissioners Ross and Creal to approve the Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes of July 15, 2020 as amended.

Roll Call Vote: (4) AYES – DeBuck, Creal, Ross, Gibson
(0) NAYS

Motion Carried

COMMUNICATIONS:

Commissioner Gibson recently received postcards regarding permit modifications of the hazardous waste facility and asked for further explanation.

Director Best explained that it is his understanding that these are the changes this Commission was briefed on early 2020 regarding their internal expansions (storage area size inside their facility only). This will allow them to process their trucks inside

the building versus having them sitting outside in the driveway. This action was taken to prevent potential spillage/dripping/bake in the sun. Their old permit limited them on how much space they could use inside resulting in a stack-up of trucks on their driveway waiting to unload. The State and landfill wanted to mitigate potential dangers by having the trucks unload waste in the proper storage area versus waiting outside to be processed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Election of Officers

Moved and seconded by Commissioners Creal and Gibson to appoint Commissioners Norm DeBuck as Chair and Benjamin Ross as Vice Chair.

**Roll Call Vote: (4) AYES – DeBuck, Creal, Ross, Gibson
(0) NAYS**

Motion Carried

2. NPDES Permit

Director Best explained every few years, the State of Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy requires all municipalities to submit a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit. This Permit covers the permitted discharges of stormwater from municipally-owned properties into the waters of the State. There are rules and requirements that protect our water resources from the impacts of run-off and stormwater (prevent flooding, maintain water quality and public education component). This Permit goes into effect 02/01/2021. An important component from this Permit is our Storm Water Pollution Prevention Initiatives. Before this Permit was required, the Township always performed these initiatives under our membership with the Alliance of Downriver Communities and Alliance of Rouge Communities, and even earlier, through our work with Our Friends with the Rouge. As a requirement, every two years, the Township has to submit a report documenting our public educational activities and water pollution clean-up efforts, which are performed in conjunction with the Alliance of Rouge Communities (communities within the Rouge Watershed). Same holds true with the Alliance of Downriver Communities (communities south of I-94 part of the Ecorse Creek, Frank and Poet Drain, Blakely Drain, and Swan Creeks Watershed). This NPDES Permit is the basis for the Wayne County Storm Water Ordinance, is based on the requirements laid out in this document (quality, quantity and public outreach).

Wayne County will be proposing changes to their stormwater ordinance, which in turn will force changes to the Township's management of its own stormwater's ordinance on existing and new developments. To date, Director Best has not seen

these new rules but understands that they will affect how we handle developments stormwater systems (ie., requirements put on the property owner to maintain in perpetuity their stormwater system in good working order).

3. Parks and Recreation Opportunities

Beginning 2020, this Commission was going to explore and suggest to the Township some environmental opportunities (environmentally friendly or centered activities, programs, or projects) within our park system. Unfortunately, COVID halted those efforts. The Township was able to move forward and implement the following environmentally-friendly activities so far:

- French Landing Park – vegetative management program under the renovation project by removing invasive species and dead/dying/sick trees and underbrush and reseeded the cleared areas with native plants (mostly low-profile grasses and wildflowers that will improve its attractiveness as well as safety – visibility into the park).
- The Township will also be expanding this program (increasing native plant areas to allow for species diversity and aid in pollination, as well as, improving safety measures) in other parks.

At the next meeting, Director Best said he will provide copies of the French Landing Park Masterplan for review. This Commission can help develop programs/activities to propose within the park to create environmentally-centered impacts with the hopes to expand into other parks and facilities. He further asked the Commission to start thinking about ideas to implement in the parks making an environmental impact through activities, programs, different ways of doing things, promotions (pet waste pickup program or deter geese from our beach area, etc.). This will become an open agenda item on future Environmental Commission meetings.

The Commission requested a video presentation of the progress and/or coordination of a site visit in the spring/summer months after everyone gets vaccinated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS:

Bell Trail Update: The Township continues to work with the Ralph Wilson Foundation and Washtenaw County. They are currently working on the trail on the Washtenaw County side up to the light at Grove Street and Rawsonville. This trail will continue from this street light around into the park through the saddle and out near the apartments. As part of the Ralph Wilson Foundation funding, work will begin this year for the section of the trail that goes up to Willow Creek to the proposed location of the bridge. Wayne County and Van Buren Twp. will be working together to pave the "dipped area" from the west to east sections of Van Buren Park where it gets dangerous (muddy when it snows/rains). A \$500k

grant was secured and the County is in the process of selecting a contractor. Another goal is to get the saddle paved to provide safe and continued accessibility to the back side of Van Buren Park. The Township is working on the trail from Edgemont, which is the City of Belleville/Van Buren Township property line on Huron River Drive to Martinsville (Riggs Park). Four of the twelve rights of way easements have been secured and will continue to work on securing the remaining easements. This project is ready to go out for bid. There will be over \$8 million worth of work performed over the next five years to get this trail completed.

In all the cemeteries, the Township has also been running a vegetation management program. The Natural Community Services (environmental-friendly vegetation management company) will start tree cutting, brush clearing and management of the vegetation in our cemeteries to revamp them.

Director Best announced that ZOOM meetings will continue through March 31st. If the State of Michigan extends their rules for ZOOM because the COVID threat remains high, the Township will continue to allow ZOOM meetings to continue.

Also, through March 31st and by direction by the Board of Trustees, the Township is now open by appointment only in attempt to keep residents and staff safe.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion Commissioner Creal, Commissioner DeBuck second to adjourn at 7:54 p.m. Motion Carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Deanna Murphy
Recording Secretary