

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF VAN BUREN
Environmental Commission
Wednesday, January 17, 2024
MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at **6:05 p.m.** in the Denton Room by **Vice Chairman Ross**.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Vice Chairman Ross, Commissioner Gibson, Commissioner Merritt, Commissioner Yob, Trustee Boynton

Absent/Excused: Chairman DeBuck

Staff: Director Akers, Secretary Zantop

Audience: One (1)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion Commissioner **Gibson**, Second Commissioner **Merritt**, to approve the agenda of January 17, 2024, as presented.

(5) AYES – Ross, Gibson, Merritt, Yob, Boynton

(0) NAYS

Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion Commissioner **Merritt**, Second Commissioner **Yob**, to approve the minutes of December 20, 2023.

(5) AYES – Ross, Gibson, Merritt, Yob, Boynton

(0) NAYS

Motion Carried.

COMMUNICATIONS:

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Various Environmental Related Issues Update

Do Not Eat Fish Signs

The Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC) sent a large group of signs to Wayne County Environmental Health. Director Akers will ask Wayne County for signs or order signs through the State. The goal is to have the signs up by spring at the Township Parks, DNR launches, and other areas around the lake.

Denton Road Bridge

The design of the bridge is continuing. There was a survey put out to the public for what type of block to use for the bridge. A change order will go before the Board of Trustees because there was an endangered water willow flower found in the causeway. The State is requiring the Township to transplant the endangered flowers in a different location. The Township will hire a company to transplant the flowers and monitor/report to the State for the next 3 years. The water willow was identified last fall and permitting through the DNR was started. Once the DNR permit is issued the Township will have a completed EGLE application and there will be a 20-day public comment period in February. If everything goes well the EGLE permit should be ready early to mid-March. The design of the bridge including consulting and permitting efforts is about \$460,000. The water willow change order will be about \$38,000 for planning, relocating, and reporting. There are trees on the causeway near the cemetery that need to be removed by the end of April because of the endangered Indiana bat. We are still on target to deliver plans to the County by the first week in March. The County will submit it through their bidding and procurement process. Hopefully, the bridge construction will start in the fall. The project should be 100% complete in mid-2025. The goal is to get the bridge open to traffic in late 2024 or early 2025.

Solid Waste Program

The Township is implementing a container swap-out and will take requests through February 1st. Residents can request to swap their trash or recycle bin for a 96 gal or 65 gal free of charge. After February 1st there will be a \$25 fee if residents want to swap bins.

Grant Application

The Township has submitted two grant applications since mid-December that are environmental related. One of the grants was submitted to the MI State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) for a masterplan update to address missing middle housing. The middle housing that is missing are duplexes, triplexes, and four-unit homes. The State has grant funding available to promote more housing due to the shortage. The grant would take a look at the housing inventory in the Township and make policy recommendations for where middle houses could fit in. If the Township receives the grant there will be a deep dive into where there is demand, where they make sense, and concept designs.

The Township now owns a vacant parcel that reverted back from Wayne County tax sale. The parcel is located off of Denton Road in Denton Village adjacent to the railroad tracks. It is a fenced-in lot that is overgrown with 8 above-ground storage tanks. The Township submitted a grant to the Wayne County Land Bank for a baseline environmental assessment, to demolish the tanks, and restore the property.

Other

Director Akers asked the commission if there were any other issues or topics they wanted to talk about or look into.

Commissioner Merritt asked if some of the dirt roads could be paved. Director Akers stated it can be done if funds are available and the cost of road projects have gone up. The Township can do a special assessment district where the Township loans money to the people who have frontage on the road and the residents pay it back over 5 years on their taxes. If there are interested individuals or streets the Township can walk them through the petition process. Commissioner Yob commented she lives on a dirt road and doesn't want it paved because people already speed on the road but the potholes are a pain.

Commissioner Yob asked about the weed (phragmites) that grows on the side of the road that causes visual blockage. Phragmites are invasive and are incredibly difficult to kill. The Township has been trying to assist the County with cutting. The Township has targeted certain areas with visual issues. If there are any areas with visual issues let Director Akers or Lockett know.

Commissioner Gibson asked if there was a different type of roof proposed and they put on an asphalt roof for the senior home on Morton Taylor and Tyler. Commissioner Gibson heard they were going to install a metal roof. Trustee Boynton stated they changed the design at one of the Planning Commission meetings.

Commissioner Gibson asked about an email from the State he forwarded to Director Akers. Director Akers will look into the email.

Commissioner Gibson suggested the commission look at doing a service project in the spring. In the past, the Commission did one in the spring and one in the fall. Two previous projects were adopt a highway and labeling of drains. Commissioner Gibson would like to get back to doing a service project at least once a year for the community. Director Akers will reach out to the HRWC to see if they have any ideas or suggestions. The Commission agreed it is a great idea and to add it to the next meeting's agenda.

Trustee Boynton asked if there was a tour scheduled last year that was canceled at the US Ecology site and if we could set up another tour. Director Akers will reach out to them.

Commissioner Ross asked for an update on the RACER Trust project. Director Akers stated RACER sent the well water restriction ordinance to the adjacent property owners to the old City of Detroit Landfill site at Ecorse and Michigan Ave. GM had an issue with the ordinance and is going back and forth with RACER. Director Akers has not received an update in 6 months.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion to Adjourn **Gibson**, Second **Boynton**, Meeting adjourned at **7:02 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Kendyl Zantop
Recording Secretary