

**FRUITLAND TOWNSHIP
PARKS AND RECREATION
SCHEDULED MEETING
August 7, 2017**

PRESENT: Chairperson Lynn Knopf, Commissioner Greg Barrett, Commissioner Brian Mathiot, Commissioner Maribeth Picard, and Commissioner Thomas Tisue.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: A number of interested parties.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Knopf called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

WELCOME GUESTS Trustee Terrie Hampel.

AGENDA: Motion by Maribeth Picard, second from Lynn Knopf, *ADOPTED*, to amend the August 7, 2017 agenda to include “1a, Public Comment” to new business after the Oak Wilt presentation.

5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT

MINUTES: Motion by Lynn Knopf, second from Brian Mathiot, *ADOPTED*, accept the June 5, 2017 regular meeting minutes.

5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT

PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Karolyn Rillema, 5549 Scenic Drive – reported that she is part of the Duck Creek Natural Area Committee. Rillema stated that discussions began in November 2016 in regards to what would become of the area, and that Chairperson Lynn Knopf is on the group as a representative for the Parks and Recreation Commission. Rillema relayed that she is very disappointed that Chairperson Knopf has not included the commission in discussions. She added that a survey was conducted, public meetings have taken place, and that not one mention of anything to the Parks and Recreation Commission took place until their June 2017 meeting. Rillema reported that the Parks and Recreation Commission has jurisdiction over 19+ acres, which could be a trail head. She also stated that the committee encourages the Parks and Recreation Commission’s involvement, and that the committee hopes the Parks and Recreation Commission will support the steering committee moving forward.
2. Laura Shields, 5225 W. McMillan Road – thanked the commissioners for serving. She added that she has been in their shoes, since she was part of the commission for many years, and that it is very near and dear to her heart. Shields stated that she is very disappointed in the hard feelings between the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Township Board. She added that the boards don’t always have to agree on things, but good communication is needed between the two groups. Shields said that if the boards remain united, they will be successful.

RECEIPTS:

Chairperson Knopf reported receipts activity as Township Park pavilion rental in the amount of \$25.00 and disc golf donations in the amount of \$336.60, for total receipts of \$361.60 for the months of June and July 2017.

Motion by Lynn Knopf, second from Tom Tisue, **ADOPTED**, to accept receipts for \$361.60 for the months of June and July 2017.

Roll Call Vote: Mathiot-Aye, Tisue-Aye, Barrett-Aye, Picard-Aye, Knopf-Aye.

DISBURSEMENTS:

Chairperson Knopf reported disbursements activity as \$390.00 to Kerstra, \$29.99 to PNC for the grill scraper, \$55.00 to Tru-Green, \$108.00 to Holly's Irrigation, \$24.21 to Lowe's for paint for the donation box on the Disc Golf Course, \$291.36 to Weber Lumber for concrete form and pour on the Disc Golf Course, \$325.24 to Greg Barrett for fuel and hauling of the cement, and for dirt on the Disc Golf Course, and \$1,436.25 to Beckman Bros, Inc. for total disbursements of \$2,660.05. She also added that the group should've been notified of extra cleanings at the park.

Motion by Lynn Knopf, second from Maribeth Picard, **ADOPTED**, to pay total disbursements of \$2,660.05.

Roll Call Vote: Knopf-Aye, Picard-Aye, Barrett-Aye, Tisue-Aye, Mathiot-Aye.

OLD BUSINESS:**1. Patrick Bouman – Eagle Scout Project**

Patrick reported that he began his Eagle Scout Project in early June. His project included work on the pavilion and fixing the playground sets. He stated that the structures were cleaned with a combination of bleach and cleaner by using a power washer. Patrick said that many boards had to be repaired to make the playground safer. The pavilion ceiling was painted a lighter color to help with natural lighting, and trim was painted a darker color. Wood stain was used on the playground equipment. Patrick added that many items had to be purchased to complete the work, but stated that he came in under his projected budget of \$1,300.00 at a total of \$973.07. The commissioners thanked Patrick for a job well done.

2. NHS volunteering

Commissioner Picard stated that the items are not yet listed on the website, and that the information needs to be passed along to Mary Mansfield to do so. She added that she needs a list of any items with hours and contact information of the commissioners, and that she would like the information on the website before school starts.

3. Pavilion door replacement

Chairperson Knopf reported that Lowe's will be installing the door. She added that a board needs to be installed at the bottom because the door is slightly higher, but added that the commission will be painting it. Someone is coming out to measure the door.

4. Park inspection

Commissioner Mathiot was in charge of the park inspection and stated that the only thing he saw was the need for general upkeep and nothing technical.

5. Website articles

Chairperson Knopf stated that she was too busy taking care of other things and this hasn't been visited.

6. Disc Golf Course update

Commissioner Barrett reported that all of the t-pads have been installed, and he thanked the volunteers for their many hours of work on this and the course in general. He added that they're looking into stump removal and tree blockers, but Chairperson Knopf urged him to hold off on doing so until decisions are made.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Oak Wilt presentation

Robert Murray introduced himself, also stating that he is not an expert in the field, but that he has a fair amount of experience with the degree that he holds. Mr. Murray gave the definition of Oak Wilt to the board, including what to look for and how to determine the types of oak trees. He compared Oak Wilt disease to a disease that has previously wiped out the elm tree. Mr. Murray stated that the trees become diseased from the inside. He said that the spread of Oak Wilt starts with a diseased tree, which will die from the inside. In terms of prevention, Mr. Murray stated that pruning should be avoided during the growing season, but it's hard to put exact dates on it. He added that once a tree is pruned or damaged, it should be painted immediately. His summary of Oak Wilt is that it is real and devastating. Mr. Murray stated that there is no known treatment to prevent it. He added that the disc golf volunteers used poor pruning practices and were not qualified. Mr. Murray said that an expert analysis should've been done prior to the course's construction, and that one needs to be completed immediately.

Commissioner Barrett asked what the DNR's time period is for pruning/cutting oak trees, adding that they are the experts. Mr. Murray still stated that a date can't be put on it for varying reasons. Commissioner Tisue asked Mr. Murray if he could help sort out the details of how much additional risk is being put in place by the disc golf course. He also added that there are many oak trees within the township, with small logging happening around the township, including three acres by his neighbor. Commissioner Tisue added that many residents take care of their own tree pruning and cutting, there are small operations going on at any time, but he wants to know how much more risk is posed due to the Disc Golf Course. Mr. Murray responded that everyone needs to get on board and stop it before a serious problem arises. He added that if someone else gets Oak Wilt on their property, the course is more susceptible. Commissioner Tisue asked that if Oak Wilt should appear in the immediate vicinity of the park, such as Dave Pacquet's home, could it necessarily be attributed to the disc golf course. Mr. Murray said that it could be if it started here. Commissioner Mathiot interjected and asked how the origination is determined, and if it is in the park. Mr. Murray stated that there isn't any fungus at this time, but the epicenter of origination should be able to be determined. He added that he isn't encouraging anyone to take his words to make a decision, but asked the commissioners to get things looked at by professionals to determine if there is a huge risk on the Disc Golf Course.

Many questions were asked by the public in regards to the disease. One individual pointed out that if there is a risk of Oak Wilt in the area, that the DNR is supposed to be the first contact,

which hasn't taken place. It was also suggested to contact as many resources and specialists as possible, with written reports rather than just vague emails.

1a. Public Comment

Letter read into the record from Robert Ingalls, 6161 South Shore Drive – a twenty-year resident, he encouraged the continued use of the Disc Golf Course. He stated that it is a safe, family friendly, healthy recreation activity. He added that whomever shut down the park for environmental impact study is very short sighted and not thinking in the community's best interest.

Michael Shotwell, 6194 Whitehall Road – a nine-year visitor of the park, agrees that there is surface damage, but that blockers can be put in. Shotwell added that the volunteers will help with any blockers and erosion problems. He also stated that the Facebook page created for the course has 275 members that would all be willing to help.

Laura Shields, 5225 W. McMillan Road – thanked the volunteers for all of their hard work and dedication, adding that she fought for a disc golf course for years while she was on the Parks and Recreation Commission. Shields added that she is surprised by all of the attention that the course has been getting. She said that it surprised her to find out that letters started coming in less than a month ago with complaints. Shields walked the park herself at the end of July and said that many of the logs laying on the course are old, with pictures being misleading. She added that simple communication could help, and she also gave handouts to the commission with many natural ideas in regards to the erosion and tree guards. Shields also stated the fact of spending nearly \$10,000 of taxpayer money to create the course, to turn around and tell them they can't use it, doesn't sit very well.

Bree Shotwell, 6194 Whitehall Road – stated that the disc golf community is a family. She said that if there are issues, the community will help find solutions, even helping financially.

Mark Williamson, 3692 Orshal Road – stated that he was asked when he was a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission to make a presentation about the Disc Golf Course to the Township Board in February, but he didn't get the chance to. He added that the course has been delivered as presented, countless hours were used to develop the course, and that more community has been using the park in the last five months than in the last 25 years. Williamson added that the course also creates revenue with donations that come in weekly. He agreed that the threat of Oak Wilt needs to be looked at, but preventative measures should be taken rather than shutting down the course. Williamson stated that he is very disappointed in the Parks and Recreation Commission and how things have been handled, saying that moving forward everyone needs to work together.

Ryan Munson, 1924 Lakewood Road – reported that a pesticide does exist to prevent Oak Wilt, and that he, too, has done his research.

Marcia Jeske, 5715 W. McMillan Road – has witnessed the increased use of the park. She added that it is a great recreational outlet, and she frequently walks the trails. Jeske added that the park and course are loved, and that the course is very popular. She thanked the volunteers for their countless hours of work. Jeske added that she hasn't received any complaints from the public. She cautioned the commission to be careful, stating that they are prohibited from using their own

opinions to represent the entire group. Jeske encouraged the commissioners to consider everyone, rather than just those they've heard from.

Robert Jacobs, 5810 Duck Lake Road – stated that since the course has been installed, he's used the park more than he did when he was in little league baseball. He added that an incredible amount of time and effort have gone into the course. Jacobs stated that he understands the ecological concerns, but insisted that the disc golf community is more than willing to help. He added that there has been some intellectual dishonesty on behalf of some individuals, such as the absurdity of comparing discs to hatchets. Jacobs pointed out that storms, animals and logging are all concerns of Oak Wilt. He stated his disappointment in the individual who took it upon themselves to close the park after getting information from colleagues rather than consulting professionals.

Robert Ingalls, 6161 South Shore Drive – spoke to how the Disc Golf Course aligns with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. He pointed out that the course is natural, and on stable ground rather than critical dune land as others have said. Ingalls agreed that there is evidence of erosion, but that it can be stopped.

Steven Gullen, 3997 Lakewood Road – stated that the beauty of the course needs to be respected. He added that he feels that neighbors and those unhappy with the course are searching for problems, and that no issues have materialized. Gullen said that he feels as though the Commission should be celebrating the huge accomplishment and shouldn't close the course under false pretenses.

Eric Wilson, - stated that he helped trim and clean up the park, but hadn't been to the park before the creation of the Disc Golf Course. Wilson asked the entire crowd who is willing to help take care of the issues the course faces, and many hands were raised. He said that if the Commission takes the course out, that they will lose many volunteers.

Tyler Shafer, 5595 Wabaningo Road – stated that he is the Eagle Scout that is helping to control the erosion problem on the course. He added that he is trying to help make the course safer for everyone to come and enjoy, and is working to make it safer environmentally.

Melissa Beegle, 6019 Zellar Road – supports the Disc Golf Course. Beegle commended Greg and the volunteers for a fantastic job. She added that she's walked the course and trails many times, and said it looks great. Beegle also pointed out that the entire Parks and Recreation Commission voted and approved the \$10,000+ course installation, also adding that to date, the course has brought in donations exceeding \$500.00, which is more than the pavilion brings in all summer. She stated that the actions taken by the Parks and Recreation Commission Chair were unacceptable. Beegle stated that it's wonderful to see the park being used, and urged the Commission to keep the course open and give it a chance.

Ferrel Mejeur, 60 W. Park Street, Fruitport – never visited the park before the course was put in. He added that the course brings in people of all ages, including families. Mejeur said that his favorite part of the course is that people are able to enjoy the lakeside. He said that the disc golf community will protect the course, and everyone is respectful of it. Mejeur said that although there are some people who aren't as respectful, which happens everywhere, the rest of the community reminds them and helps to take care of things. He also added that the Disc Golf Course is a great way to bring everyone together.

Dave Paquet, 5650 W. Duck Lake Road – has nothing against the sport of disc golf or the people. He stated that his concerns are the details and due process. Paquet added that the course is a huge change, and no review of the park was completed before installation.

Aaron Mitchell, 2269 Vine Avenue, Muskegon – a disc golf enthusiast, he has played at courses all over the country. He stated that no courses have been shut down due to Oak Wilt disease. Mitchell pointed out that the disc golf community helps everyone, and would do whatever they can to protect the course environment. He asked the question of who would take the course out.

Robert Penny, 5830 W. Duck Lake Road – admitted to taking some of the pictures that were taken of the course. He added that many trees are damaged, and there are quite a few oak trees on the property. Penny stated that he feels as if there is a very real threat of Oak Wilt on the course, and urged the Commission to seek experts.

Jack Mitenbuler, tourist – pointed out that tourists spend approximately \$3.1 billion dollars a year here. He stated that he has been to the course, helped take pictures of the course, and that there is obvious damage in just ten weeks.

Lonny Ward, 5854 W. Duck Lake Road – a sports enthusiast. He stated that he has picked up knowledge, such as the type of frisbees that are used. Ward stated that he was stunned to see how things were trimmed and the stumps throughout the course. He added that the Commission does need more knowledge, and that things should've been considered before putting in the course. Ward agreed that with minimal risk, the course should remain open, but the Commission needs to get more information from professionals.

Robert Murray, 5582 W. Duck Lake Road – applauds the passion of the disc golf community. He stated that a lot of attention to detail and issues were not attended to at the onset of the course. Murray said that he is mystified after looking over the Parks and Recreation Commission's Master Plan, and that Nestrom Road Park and disc golf were not on the action list, that everything was ignored.

Terrie Hampel, 6171 W. Duck Lake Road – as the liaison between the Township Board and the Parks and Recreation Commission, she fully supports the Commission. Hampel added that recreation is part of the Master Plan, and disc golf is a way of recreating. She stated that the Commission didn't do their due diligence, but added that going forward, all sides need to be looked at and everyone needs to look at things rationally. Hampel added that there are great ideas being given, but now solutions are needed.

Brad Shafer, 5595 Wabaningo Road – a resident for 45 years. He said he is amazed to see the number of people at the park every day. Shafer added that he helped with the course and doesn't even use it. In terms of the Master Plan, he said that the Parks and Recreation Commissioners are visionaries, and thanked the commission for that. Shafer said that Oak Wilt is real, and that he wants to be a part of the solution and offered his time to help.

Jan Deur, 2761 Scenic Drive – a former Planning Commission and Township Board member, he stated that he understands what it's like to be sitting where the commissioners are sitting. He thanked the commissioners for their service. Deur said that he knew little about disc golf, but he finds it interesting and loves seeing different family types and people of all ages enjoying the

course. In regards to noise complaints, Deur stated that it is no worse than any other public setting. He supports the course.

With no further speakers, Chairperson Knopf closed public comment. The commissioners adjourned for a short five-minute break.

2. Discussion and vote on temporary closure of Nestrom Road Park to Disc Golf play

Commissioner Tisue stated that a motion had to be put on the floor to discuss and vote on the temporary closure of the course.

Motion by Lynn Knopf, second from Maribeth Picard, **ADOPTED**, to discuss the issues and vote on temporary closure of Nestrom Road Park to Disc Golf play.

3 AYES, 2 NAYS, 0 ABSENT (Tisue and Barrett, Nay)

Chairperson Knopf stated that she had a professor from Grand Valley State University's Department of Biology, Todd Aschenbach, come out to give his impression of the course, and no written report was given but he stated in an email that there was environmental degradation such as tree damage and tree removal/erosion. Aschenbach is holding a course in the fall, and stated that a student could come out to the course in the fall to give an evaluation and offer solutions. Chairperson Knopf stated that she wants professionals to come in and look at the course. Aschenbach told Chairperson Knopf that he saw sticks on the course to prevent erosion, but that the way they were placed were actually increasing erosion. Chairperson Knopf stated that she would like the amateurish attempts at preventing erosion to stop. She also pointed out violations she saw in the contract, including cutting of trees, the approval of signs, erosion issues, and leaf removal. Chairperson Knopf stated that the Commission's number one responsibility is to the park and protecting the park. She said that she agrees that the Commission didn't follow the survey or the Master Plan, adding that Nestrom Road Park isn't a compatible use for the Disc Golf Course with the damage and disease possibilities in the park.

Commissioner Mathiot pointed out that the Master Plan is a hot point for many individuals, and that some items have been addressed and some have not. He added that the Commission still has three years to complete their list, and that he doesn't feel it is a viable argument to use. Chairperson Knopf argued that the Master Plan has to be a priority, and the Commission didn't follow it.

Commissioner Mathiot also added that Chairperson Knopf is changing her direction from many meetings before where she had originally supported and voted for the installation of the course, and she responded that she is and hadn't been cautious enough, and with promises made originally, she was in support. Commissioner Picard said that the injuries to the trees are already there, but that the group needs to look for solutions. Chairperson Knopf stated that professionals need to come out and assess the course and damage, and that there should be a halt to play until that happens. Commissioner Mathiot questioned that timeline, and Chairperson Knopf said that she's not sure of the timeline. She is asking for a halt to play so that experts can come out.

Commissioner Tisue stated that he feels as if the course is a great recreational activity within the Township. He added that everyone is operating on very little knowledge. Commissioner Tisue

stated that he would like to hear the experts' opinions before making any decisions regarding the course. He added that there is much help and good will, but that there is no plan.

Commissioner Mathiot said that the Commission needs to have all of the facts and be fully informed before making a decision. He added that for Chairperson Knopf to suggest Facebook as an authority and to quote it and use it as a basis for forming opinions is not acceptable. He said that he doesn't recommend it moving forward. Chairperson Knopf stated that she was able to find out a lot of information on the Facebook page.

Motion by Tom Tisue, second from Greg Barrett, **ADOPTED**, to table the issue of closing the Disc Golf Course.

3 AYES, 2 NAYS, 0 ABSENT (Tisue and Barrett, Nay)

Roll Call Vote: Mathiot-Aye, Tisue-Aye, Barrett-Aye, Picard-Aye, Knopf-Nay.

UPDATES:

None.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS:

Commissioner Barrett commented that the tall trees that were already cut are the trees that they wanted to use to prevent erosion. He also added that the trees laying on the ground were not cut by the disc golf volunteers.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion by Lynn Knopf, second from Brian Mathiot, **ADOPTED** to adjourn the August 7, 2017 scheduled meeting of the Fruitland Township Parks and Recreation Commission at 9:40 PM.

5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Mansfield, Recording Secretary