

**Peninsula Township
Bowers Harbor Park Expansion Public Input Meeting
Township Hall
February 23, 2017 7 pm**

Meeting began at 7:00 pm, led by **Susie Shipman**.

Shipman: Welcome! She has stayed involve in the process with the Bowers Harbor Expansion, even though she is no longer on the park commission, and is the chair of the expansion committee. Thank you to the committee members who have dedicated hours to the project (as well as members of the public who have been dedicated attendees). Tonight the four will be to look at the final proposed concept plan - Christy Summers and Caitlin Jackson (from Beckett & Raeder, Inc.) will be presenting. The committee is open to back and forth conversation tonight.

Summers: She has been working with Susie and Mary and other committee members for several months now. They're excited to see the culmination of this plan. She hopes that many who have given input this summer (at the input meeting in August) will see some of their ideas in the new plan.

There is about an hour and a half planned tonight - she wants plenty of opportunity for questions and answers. Comment cards have also been provided.

Explanation of Project Catalyst:

Many know there's an existing park here - it's been a fairly active part of the park system (sports fields here). Some adjacent property became available a few years ago that had previously been orchards. Rather than that being developed into a subdivision, the township acquired it to keep it as open space available for recreational use. They worked with the Nature Conservancy to acquire a grant through the DNR. They quickly developed a design plan to show the DNR their intentions (3 years ago). There was a deadline for the grant, so it moved quickly. There wasn't a public process because of the short timeline.

Most of the development was passive recreation - trails, picnic pavilion, etc. There was also some interest in a potential dog park, as well as some buffer along the edges. There would be accommodating pathways and boardwalks through the wetlands, as well as picnic provisions - grills, etc. The grant went through and the township purchased the property.

Around then, a "due care" analysis was prepared (since site was previously an orchard). Recognizing potential recreational uses, the township wanted to do its due diligence. The land had been forested, then an apple orchard, then a cherry orchard, and then vacant. The testing found low levels of arsenic and lead (common residual agrochemicals). The risk factors were extremely low when looked at for recreational use. To be a health risk, repetitive exposure would be required (day in and day out direct contact and exposure to the soil for years and years and years). Any proposed plan will be reviewed by environmental professional for exposure or exacerbation during construction or use. (For example, a dog park may kick up more dirt than a trail would.) The response activities that came up were: vegetative hedge row or fencing, additional soil characterization for more intensive recreation activities, and an environmental construction management plan for during construction.

Knowing that, Beckett and Raeder with the Expansion Team held a meeting on 8/18 for public input. Around 60 people came and they used an interactive process with clickers and asked people how they felt about certain recreational activities.

- A: definitely would be a positive addition to the park. Choices while using the clickers were:
- B: could be good
- C: neutral
- D: not desired at all

They showed imagery and cost parameters and looked for responses. They took the results and charted them. The ones that rose to the top as elements that needed to remain were: playground, pedestrian trails, basketball courts, soccer fields, baseball fields, tennis courts, and picnic pavilions. For the potential elements, the desirable things were (based on clicker responses): improved gravel parking, multi-use pavilion, open green lawns, native meadow plantings, natural tree cover, outdoor ice rink, cross country ski trails, a sled hill, playground with PIP safety surface,

non-motorized trails, and interpretive trails. The process was incredibly informative for them to move into the next phase of the plan.

As they created the next phase, they looked at the existing park and expansion area as one park. They also got input aside from the clicker method - comment cards, emails, etc. They heard loud and clear that people wanted the existing park to remain active and the expansion to remain natural. This new plan accomplishes that. In the existing park, there are two existing baseball fields and soccer fields. The parking would be more formalized (still gravel) and more delineated. Existing pavilions would remain. In the area between the ball field and the pavilion they'd relocate the volleyball court. This relocation would allow an ice rink to be put in (60' x 120') that would allow for some recreational ice skating and pickup hockey. The rink would be a "kit rink" that would be put up in the winter and taken down in the summer. Existing play equipment would be replaced with a larger structure in each area (for condition and deficiencies in current equipment). The basketball and tennis courts would stay in place as well.

In the expansion area, the original park design that was submitted to the DNR was preferred, minus the dog park. There was no majority consensus for a dog park to be included in the plan. It also includes a small gravel lot (about 50 cars) with an overflow area that accommodates around 240 cars. There would be a vault toilet and a small picnic pavilion with a grill. There's also a trail loop (boardwalk over wetland area) - which makes a 1 mile loop. There's also a multi-use pavilion, as well as an overlook out to the bay. There's a buffer area to the north and the west, as well as along the other side for consistency and to delineate edge. A sidewalk connects to the existing active park. The connection is important, even though one is more active than the other.

The small kit ice rink is manageable for township staff to set up - it's not a complicated setup. The large play structure would have PIP safety surfacing (as opposed to a mulch that compacts and displaces over time and requires more maintenance). The small play structure might be a climbing apparatus. They didn't design the actual play components, but the master plan includes a large play structure and possible smaller one.

The gravel trails and boardwalk trails are envisioned as natural, but also readily accessible to people of all ability levels. The multi-use pavilion could function as a picnic pavilion, but also could be used for an event or projecting. The smaller picnic pavilion would be a more traditional small, square structure.

The kiosk sign would match the other parks in the area and could have special announcements, upcoming things, etc. The dry meadow area and wet meadow area would allow large areas to remain unmowed - also can remain a natural habitat for butterflies and bees, etc.

Questions / comments:

- In the current park there are park benches around the walkway. Is there any designation of those around the 1 mile loop?

Summers: I don't think we added that, but I'm sure the committee would be interested in that comment.

- Is there a water source for the new area? A pump?

Summers: No, there is not intended to be a water source in the new area.

- The design of the pavilions - is that the planned design?

Summers: No, those are just character images - stock images.

- I like having those areas to get under for shade, but it would be nice if you could make them fit the aura of the traditional building style.

Summers: What is it lacking?

- The one on the left looks more modern - the other one has wood and looks more earthy. Tahquamenon Falls has some really nice structures and pavilions that are incorporated into the look and they fit in.

- With the play structures, I like your pictures with the benches. I just saw one in CA that had sails that create shade - it was incredibly nice. When it's sunny, to be able to sit in the shade with the toddlers was nice. There's also a huge amount of spotted napweed in the area. It's very unattractive. Trying to get native plants instead of the spotted napweed would be nice, although I think it's harder to remove than we think it is.

- Thank you for your work! You did a great job in finding out what the public wanted and incorporating it into the plan. I like how there's an active and passive part to the park. When we took the public vote and people wanted pavilions, there are two in the active - do you really want the second multi-use? Or should that area of the park be more for quiet and natural areas? Maybe that 4th pavilion isn't needed?

Summers: Even among the committee there was debate, and it ended up staying on the plan, but it's in a very very late phase. We may decide that another pavilion isn't necessary.

- Will hunting be permitted?

Summers: No.

The hunting couldn't be within the distance (450 feet) of the residents. They'll look into if it's a mandatory requirement for the land acquisitions to allow it.

- There's been a lot of conversation in the community about the \$30,000 that's requested in the budget for fence. Can you explain that? It's important that the education get out in the community that it's a necessary thing.

Summers: Indeed, that buffer is a requirement.

- When you talked about replacing the two playscapes, the pictures have some swings that adults and teenagers can use - I would hope you wouldn't gear it only towards little children.

Summers: We would gear it to all ages. When you gear it only towards younger kids, it doesn't get used as often. The play structures haven't been formalized, so there's still time to give input on what those look like.

- For the tennis courts, they're currently marked for pickle ball - I'd hope that we'd keep them that way.

Summers: Yes.

- The new pavilions - would those include picnic tables under them?

Summers: Yes.

- How are you handling the farm activity to the east line? A lot of the vines are over into the park property. They're using all the way around the east border around the new park and it's not in the easement language that it's part of the easement that they have. From what I've seen this fall, there's a ton of activity going on out there that's out of control and spilling into the old park. It alarmed me enough that I videotaped it and spoke to all of the park officials about it. Still, nothing has been addressed. It seems like a really dangerous thing that's occurring there. We have a nice park coming - we mentioned the \$30,000 in fencing and I hope that's adequate, because there's no control on the vineyard side for the township.

Shipman: I'm not directly involved, but I understand there are measures happening to take care of that. If you see on the northeast edge, the trail was originally closer to that boundary and we moved it further away. This isn't a construction plan, it's a concept plan. We talked about a fence to delineate property, but also some vegetation to protect from spray coming over. The fence and vegetative buffer are there in the concept plan.

Summers: This is not your only chance for comment - but for now we'll move forward to next steps.

Project implementation

As far as the immediate improvements, we're looking at \$30,000 - \$35,000. This will include signage, litter receptacles, site clean-up, fencing, mowed parking area, mowed trail loop, and kiosk in the new park area; also kiosk and fencing in existing park area.

The Phase 1 improvements (2018-2020) would be another \$800,000 - \$1,200,000. This funding could come from the township, the MDNR trust fund, GTRLC, rotary, foundations, private donations, etc. This phase would include accessible gravel trails, gravel parking lot, kiosk, vault toilet, and accessible boardwalk trails in the new park area; north play structure, south play structure, PIP safety surfacing, kit ice rink, and the relocation of the volleyball court in the existing park area.

The future improvements (2020 and beyond) would be all of the other improvements. That could include an additional multi-purpose pavilion, the meadow lawns, etc.

Shipman: With the \$30,000 - \$35,000, that includes more than just the fencing. In the existing, the north and west boundaries were done years ago and have included trees and fallen down fencing. That's included in the fencing quotes that have been requested. Also, the east section is included. Split rail is part of the character of Old Mission and is included in some of the other parks, so that's what we've looked at. The south side is a thick forest area, so in the interest of not overspending, a quote wasn't requested for that. In the new area, split rail was requested where there wasn't dense forest on the east and south side. The west side would be a 2-wire fence. The fencing will protect the public from using it, and also from the soil being turned up.

The fencing protects the residents outside the park, and also it protects the park from having soil turned up. We also talked about a fence between the existing park and new park.

- Someone mentioned during the marathons, that split rail fence won't accommodate all that overflow.

Shipman: The maintenance worker for the township (Bob) and I talked about the ability to remove the rails in order to accommodate those races.

- When you were outlining the fences, I thought we agreed the east boundary along the vineyard was the wire / post - the same as the west boundary.

Shipman: Yes, I apologize - that's correct. I asked for quotes on both types of fencing.

- On the existing side to the east, that's going to be split rail?

Shipman: Yes. And that will take care of the concern about that particular side of the park being trespassed onto.

- Is there any proposal for periodic review of the concept? Any recommendations of how often the concept should be reviewed?

Shipman: I'm not sure about the committee, but I think the Park Commission as part of their 5-year-plan would include that as part of their review process. Once the committee passes it off, it will be in the hands of the Park Commission.

Summers: I think there will be multiple chances for that - it will be phased in over time.

Shipman: After this, the committee will meet again and make final recommendations, then send it to the park commission. There may be a public hearing before it goes to the town board. This isn't a public hearing, per say - it's a public input session.

- Thank you to all of the people who worked so hard to get it to this stage! As someone who has been looking at it from the outside, it's amazing what you've accomplished.

Summers: Thank you - we've really enjoyed the process. It's great to see so many people wanting to do right by the people and right by the property.

Meeting concluded at 8:15 pm.

(Minutes submitted by Rachel Mavis, recording secretary.)