

**PENINSULA TOWNSHIP PARKS COMMITTEE**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**April 27, 2022, 7:00 p.m.**  
**MINUTES**

1. **Call to Order** by Skurski at 7:00 p.m.
2. **Pledge**
3. **Roll Call**  
Present: Shanafelt, Karczewski, Skurski, Chown, Murphy, Milliken  
Excused: Dahl, Zebell
4. **Approve Agenda: Shanafelt moved to approve the agenda with a second by Milliken. passed unan**
5. **Brief Citizen Comments (for agenda items only: none**
6. **Conflict of Interest: none**
7. **Consent Agenda: any member of the board, staff, or the public may ask that any item on the consent agenda be removed and placed elsewhere on the agenda for full discussion.**

- A. Minutes from April 6, 2022
- B. William Stott correspondence
- C. Lighthouse Trash Report
- D. Bowers Harbor Pictures - Don Atkinson
- E. Kelly boat launch - Dean Elanges
- F. Conrad/Skurski Correspondence

**Karczewski moved to approve the consent agenda with the April 6, 2022, minutes as amended with a second by Chown. passed unan**

**8. Business**

- A. Public Hearing: Parks Master Plan Change - Skurski
  - a. Pickleball Courts at Bowers Harbor
  - b. Public Comment Members of the public are invited to comment on the proposed pickleball courts, which include positioning a six-court pickleball court structure south of the existing tennis courts, relocating the basketball court west of the tennis courts, and eliminating or moving the conceptual ice skating rink.

Skurski closed the public portion of the meeting at 7:15 p.m. and opened up the public hearing on the proposed master plan change in Bowers Harbor Park.

**Dawn Hemming, 2455 Neahtawanta:** is here tonight with a strong contingent of people who are in favor of building pickleball courts. Appreciates the help of the parks committee and the town board in getting to this point. Paid for some engineering and worked with Team Elmer's and the township engineer to locate an appropriate site within the park, which is just south of the existing tennis courts. Have applied for grants, raised some money, and have a successful fundraising team. Are planning an annual fundraising event to pay for ongoing maintenance costs. In doing court construction research, court surfaces today are not one and a half inches thick but three inches thick.

They are more sustainable than the courts we now have at Bowers Harbor. Expect an eight- to ten-year life span before they need to be refurbished, with a cost estimate of \$30,000. Will begin setting aside those funds this year. Intend to implement a phasing process as this is an expensive endeavor. Items such as the covered pergola, seating, and windscreens would come later. Will start with the posts, nets, and asphalt and do the rest when we raise the money.

**Shanafelt:** what about regular maintenance throughout the year?

**Hemmings:** yearly maintenance is minimal. The pickleball group will pay for anything required.

**Chown:** do you have a timeline for the three phases of the project and how long each phase takes to accomplish?

**Hemming:** it depends on how quickly the money comes in; it is all money based. We cannot do our first phase until we have the money in hand. We did not want to actively fundraise until we had a good idea this can move forward. We have 50 donors, but the fundraising group met for the first time Monday (April 25, 2022).

**Chown:** the cost of the pergola is included in the \$300,000 amount?

**Hemming:** yes. We want to raise the money for the courts and then the ancillary items.

**Skurski:** the first phase is the base foundation, marking off the courts, fencing, nets, and the posts?

**Hemming:** yes, this may sound minimal, but the cost is \$13,000.

**Shanafelt:** so the last set of costs were for eight courts and you did the calculation for six courts based off the eight, so are these now the correct figures?

**Hemming:** yes. Jennifer Hodges from Gourdie-Fraser will oversee the project for the township. Manigold signed off on this. We are now working with Gosling Czubak of Traverse City.

**Don Conway, 14542 Mapleton Lane:** since we are talking about the footprint and a change to the master plan, it is worth having it on the record that a number of locations were looked at. Four other locations were considered, not including the 60 acres off of Devils Dive, and only then was the current site decided upon. This came after deliberations taking place over two to three months. The proposed location is just south of the tennis courts and the cedar hedge, which is the current location of the basketball court. This is between the pathway to the east and the baseball field to the west. We can fit six courts there with a social gathering area between the two sets of courts. The social aspect of pickleball is one of the reasons it is so popular. So this brings us to making a change in the master plan, which is why we are here. By putting the pickleball courts there, which was not anticipated in the 2017–2018 master plan for Bowers Harbor Park, a new basketball court would have to be constructed elsewhere and right now it is being shown conceptually as just west of the tennis courts. Those would be the changes coming out of this. I saw in the agenda there was talk of a conceptual ice rink. That has not been any part of our discussions.

**Skurski:** can you describe how pickleball is now played on the existing tennis courts?

**Conway:** we currently have four provisional courts located on one of the tennis courts. The four pickleball courts are fairly close together. The temporary nets need to be assembled and then placed on the courts. The courts are four to five feet apart. There are safety issues with players chasing balls going into the other courts or people stepping on balls, which results in them falling. We went to the USA Pickleball Association and looked at their design criteria. They have suggestions for how much buffer space you should have between courts. We will have more space to the back and sides of each court in the proposed plan.

**Skurski:** in looking at the footprint and location of the proposed courts, there is a rise in the southwest corner that will require a retaining wall and trees in the area need protection. Because we

are installing more hard surfaces, a stormwater basin to collect water run-off is needed according to the engineering plan. The existing basketball court would be moved in between the existing tennis courts and the volleyball court. The basketball court would be replaced with a junior court, which is a three-quarters court. In our work with LIAA and a public opinion survey, a bathroom at Bowers Harbor scored high on what people want. We have asked for the costs of a 3X3 bathroom with running water. There would be a septic field, and the pickleball court placement does not interfere with the bathroom plan. The ice skating rink scored high in the 2017 Park and Recreation Plan and the 2018 Bowers Harbor Expansion Plan. We do not know the level of support now, but there is room to fit this in if required. I invite any public comments.

**Bill Canton, 2600 Bowers Harbor Rd:** I live right next to the park. I believe this is a compromise on many different levels, but it's the best thing we can have over there, and it would be a very good idea. This park is used and more people will use the park, and this is a good thing. I come out of Detroit and the Detroit parks are mostly unusable and dangerous. The number one item to help the parks is to have more people using the parks.

**Jane Conard, 3635 Sugar Shack Dr.:** is the township going to help fund this project?

**Skurski:** our understanding now is this is going to be a gift to the township.

**Chuck Knox, 14534 Bluff Road:** pickleball is the fastest growing sport in the United States. This would be good for the entire community. You have older people playing pickleball and younger people finding it more fun than playing tennis as it is an easier game to learn and you don't have to run so far. I play at the Y six days a week and there are at least 20 people I play with there who would come here to play on our courts.

**Dawn Hemming:** to answer the question about funding, yes the courts are a gift to the township. A couple of the grantees are not funding this quarter due to the stock market, but we will raise as much money as we can on our own. We are not building anything unless we have the money to pay for each part of the project. I have come to see the courts as a place for camaraderie, recreation, fitness, friendship, and for generations to come. This is a fun, exciting sport.

**Linda Raetz, 13481 Centennial Lane:** the thing I like about Old Mission Peninsula is this is a community. When we were younger, we interacted with each other at school with our children and now, as we get older, we are interacting with each other around pickleball. I am in favor of it.

**Skurski:** with no more public comments, I want to introduce Bob Wilkinson, who is the groundskeeper for the parks. I would like your input.

**Bob Wilkinson:** my personal opinion is anything we can do at any of the parks to bring people together to create a sense of community is a benefit to all. I see people using the baseball field, the tennis courts, and walking the trails. These are good activities within a community.

**Karczewski:** will the tennis courts still be used for pickleball?

**Skurski:** this is the year we need to resurface the tennis courts and maybe we would keep the tennis court to the east strictly for tennis and the other as an overflow for pickleball play. What do players in the audience think?

**Hemming:** with this project, we have more people coming out to play and checking out the game itself. The demand will be there. We bring our own leaf blowers to clear off the courts now.

**Milliken:** there might be more tennis players once the courts are in better shape.

**Shanafelt:** based on the timing of construction, we might need to double stripe the tennis courts if the proposed pickleball courts are not finished and we are resurfacing the tennis courts first.

**Karczewski:** this is keeping the master plan in line with the changing times.

**Skurski:** the next step is to lay out a resolution with acceptance for the change to the master plan. Any recommendations then go to the town board for final approval. The master plan is used by state agencies and other funding charitable organizations where they look for your consistency of use. If we suddenly were to want a swimming pool, and it was not in the master plan, but pickleball and playground equipment were, items in the master plan take precedence.

**Shanafelt moved to make a formal recommendation to the township board for the pickleball court addition to Bowers Harbor Park per the presented plan; this includes the demolition and removal of the existing basketball court where the new pickleball courts will go and associated changes resulting from that and the new location of the basketball court to the west side of the tennis courts with a slight modification to the plan to accommodate two half courts leading to a change to the existing master plan with a second by Karczewski.**

**Roll call vote: Yes - Shanafelt, Karczewski, Skurski, Chown, Murphy, Milliken passed unan**

Skurski closed the public hearing on the pickleball courts and resumed the regular parks committee meeting at 7:57 p.m.

**Murphy:** asked about fundraising and steps after changing the master plan.

**Karczewski:** if we are fundraising for the township and they are fundraising, it looks like the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. There should be some coordination because going in as competing interests is self-defeating.

**Shanafelt:** we do need to make the town board aware there is now a need for a new basketball court with an estimated cost of \$30,000 and the pickleball group has not committed to paying for this.

#### B. PNA expansion

**Murphy:** the PNA expansion has been in the works since 2009. The citizen effort to create Pelizzari Natural Area began in 1995. It took until 2008 to get a millage vote and the conservancy kicked in about another half million dollars to make the project happen. Immediately, we knew there were other parcels that could fit and we made some efforts even then to keep the park growing. The timing was wrong on many fronts; I think the parks commission was on overwhelm, grant writing was not available, and we really did not see willing sellers at the time. When this committee formed in 2019, we became aware of \$300,000 in a fund balance for Pelizzari from the original millage collection, which was not to be used for maintenance but for acquisition, construction, and improvement. We did some work with the township attorney to make sure we stopped bleeding the fund for maintenance and the money remains there because that is what the millage says it was to be used for. I started surveying neighbors to assess what interest there was to seeing the park land expanded. One of the interested parties is Walt Meeker, who said I could use his name. We have been working for almost two years to come up with a valuation on his 15 acres, which is not contiguous with the existing park (passed out map). The parcel we are looking at is the odd-shaped one.

**Chown:** it's an extraordinary property. It's hard to believe we have something of this size on the south end. The trails are exceptional and there are old-growth trees, all kinds of birds, and wildlife. Eventually connecting this property to Pelizzari will be a dream come true.

**Murphy:** I brought the trail builder from the conservancy out to the property. He was more enthusiastic than anyone because he can see the range of potential trails. The one glitch is the lack of contiguousness. We have had the Meeker land appraised, which was paid for by the township, and considerable time donated by conservancy staff. Meeker paid for an engineering study to see how many development sites are there – it's 13. This is prime land and will sell for a high price. Meeker

indicated he may make a bargain sale to us. We were hoping with the work with LIAA we would be able to get a millage on the ballot for parks, and that is not going to happen. The conservancy is giving this strong consideration for a fundraising effort, but there is not a definite yes at the moment. The conservancy looks for a 25% contribution from the township. The parcel is appraised at \$700,000. The conservancy will only fundraise if they extinguish the development rights. I wish this parcel were adjacent, but we do have an eager seller. I want to secure one other interested party and make sure the development rights are extinguished.

**Chown:** if the conservancy steps up and raises the money and turns this parcel over to the township, this is going to send a strong message to the other neighbors. The momentum will be clear and the people who are not ready now but are interested will take note.

#### C. Park 2022 Maintenance Projects

**Shanafelt:** the first pass of the budget has allocated park maintenance at \$22,500. The input from committee members reflects the need for health and safety issues to be addressed within the parks and the maintenance list reflects this (see page 28 of packet). The committee discussed with Wilkinson tree maintenance, bathrooms at Bowers Harbor Park, removing the remaining boat launch at Haserot Beach, stairs at Archie Park with a lifesaving ring along the beach, repairing the veteran's memorial at the lighthouse, and striping the parking lot across from Haserot.

#### D. Volunteer Days

**Skurski:** we have discussed a volunteer day at Archie. Need to know when the Center Road paving will move past Archie and determine how to get the date out to potential volunteers. Scuba divers also use Archie. There is \$4,500 from insurance money to be used for plantings at Archie.

**Karczewski:** we might look into Cherry Capital Cycling adopting Archie as they use the parking lot to stage some of their events.

#### E. Park Grant Applications

**Chown:** Township Treasurer Marge Achorn and I have been working together for a month to write grants. Murphy wrote a grant to the Oleson Foundation for the hemlock corridor at Pelizzari. The state funding request decisions will be out sometime in June. We are also submitting grant requests to the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation.

#### F. Procedure for Parks Requesting Purchases and Services (Achorn)

**Skurski:** we will create a template for purchases and one for Wilkinson to keep better records of our spending on parks.

#### G. Parks Rep for next Town Board Meeting

**Skurski:** will present the master plan change, the maintenance plan, and have a date for the volunteer day at Archie.

**9. Citizen Comments:** none

#### 10. Board Comments

**Chown:** thanked Wilkinson for coming to the meeting.

**Shanafelt:** agreed to represent the parks committee on a zoom call with Rotary Charities regarding the pickleball grant application. Asked for a copy of the grant application before the meeting.

#### 11. Adjournment:

**Murphy moved to adjourn with a second by Milliken.**

**passed unan**

Adjourned at 9:25 p.m.