

**VILLAGE OF HARTLAND
ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDOR AND OPEN SPACE
TASK FORCE MINUTES
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2016
7:00 PM
BOARD ROOM
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 210 COTTONWOOD AVE.**

Present: Michelle Bonness, Mike Gerszewski, Tim Hallquist, Courtney Marschalek, David Pride and Carol Zahorik. Excused: David deCourcy-Bower and Mike Einweck.

Others Present: Village Administrator David Cox

Appoint a Chairperson Pro Tem for this meeting due to absence of Chairperson

Motion (Bonness/Marschalek) to appoint Tim Hallquist as Chairperson Pro Tem for tonight's meeting. Carried (6-0).

Roll Call

1. Consideration of approval of Minutes of the July 28, 2016 Meeting

Motion (Bonness/Pride) to approve the July 28, 2016 Minutes. Carried (6-0).

2. Introduction and review of Village GIS System – Mike Gerszewski, Operations Supervisor

Mike Gerszewski focused on the areas of GIS that the task force could use on a tablet or cell phone if they were out in the field and wanted to access data for information.

It was noted that, for example, the “significant” trees in Penbrook Park have been surveyed, but not every tree has been surveyed. It's a matter of economy. It has been suggested to the Village Board that all of the trees in Penbrook should be surveyed. One of the things that the task force may want to think about is what should we survey and what that cost might be.

There was a question about who is in charge of the area north of Hartbrook Park where there are a lot of downed trees. The trees that were mentioned are on private property. The Village has an easement for the path, but everything else is private. The Village can only remove trees that are obstructing the path.

3. Discussion of Individual visits to Environmental Corridors and Parks

Centennial Park:

David Pride described Centennial Park as “plush”. He noticed it has “miles” of Munson fences. He asked if the Chiefs pay something toward the park. Mike Gerszewski stated that the Chiefs' own the scoreboard, the scorebox and the bleachers. They do pay the Village to maintain and prep the field when they are using it, as do all the sports leagues. The DPW cuts the grass once a week in every park in the Village. We

have 82 acres of grass that we cut every week – park land and open space. We have user fees for the fields, park shelters and the fine arts center, which all generate revenue.

Mr. Pride said he saw that some of the paths needed seal coating. Mike Gerszewski replied that we use a method similar to the rating system that the State uses for streets. Every two years the Village re-evaluates the paths to set priorities for maintenance and replacement.

Ms. Zahorik commented that the new bathroom was a nice amenity. She inquired about a kayak launch in that area of Centennial Park. DPW Operations Supervisor Gerszewski stated that right now there are too many fallen trees and you would have to portage on private property. She suggested planting native berry bushes near the benches. Ms. Zahorik saw only one bike rack in the park system at Bark River Park and thought every park should have one. Mike Gerszewski said there is also one by the splash pad. He thought that idea could be considered in the future.

Ms. Marschalek stated that she was focusing only on the wooded areas. There is a small wooded area along the Bark River where it might be nice to have some access to the river for overlooks and for catching frogs. Do we want more access to the river? It was mentioned that at one time there was a clearing to the river where the benches are so you could see the river.

Ms. Bonness had also been looking at the same wooded area at Centennial. She saw one Oak tree. The historical picture showed that the park had been corn field.

The soccer goals at Centennial are in storage. The group that used to use the field is no longer using it.

Tim Hallquist noted that the five step bleachers do not have sides. All the other bleachers in the Village have fenced sides. This may or may not be a safety requirement.

Wheelchair access to the bleachers is not hard surface and Mr. Hallquist wondered if that was against ADA regulations. The north side of the bleachers has a broken weld. Also the north steps on the top row has a loose foot plate.

It was suggested that all benches and all the playground equipment need to be power washed.

Nottingham Park:

Mike Gerszewski stated that the Village repaved Nottingham Park – it is maintained by the Village. The rest of Hartridge Subdivision is maintained by the Homeowners Association. Each property pays \$15 a year to the Association for the path and open space maintenance. The trail system was built in lieu of sidewalks in the subdivision, so children could get to Hartland South. The Village maintains some of the paths, and the HOA maintains others. The Village plows snow on some of the paths and the HOA contracts someone to plow the others. That is where GIS can be helpful in showing who owns what. Nottingham Park only has a water tower, no playground equipment.

Carol Zahorik stated that she thought Nottingham could use a sign, some trails, a park bench, and she was curious on how it got its name. She is curious about how all the parks got their names.

Nottingham Park is a little under two acres. Although not an environmental corridor, it is wooded from the trail up on the side of the hill. The Village doesn't encourage people to go to Nottingham because we do get quite a bit of vandalism (graffiti spray painted on the water tower). We have talked about fencing in the water tower. Maybe more traffic would help. The dense area of trees at Nottingham has not been surveyed. The task force may want to think about that. There are about 15 nice oak trees in Nottingham. The four trees that are surveyed are in the open part of the park.

It might be good to get rid of the buckthorn and save the trees. If the buckthorn is cleared, it will open everything up. How would the neighbors feel about that? That's a good discussion to have. What level should the Village maintain a natural area in a residential district?

Some of the Penbrook Park neighbors have said they would like the wooded area opened up because now it is a place for illegal activities. There is an over-abundance of buckthorn in Penbrook and opening it up to trails may draw more people to the area and drive out some of the non-desirable activities.

Mr. Pride talked about the machine that is used to cut down buckthorn and the process of adding an herbicide to those stumps. He wondered if that was necessary.

Mike Gerszewski said it is necessary to get rid of buckthorn in that manner or it comes right back. It depends upon what the task force wishes.

There are several outlooks on buckthorn. Some people like to walk a trail and feel like they are up north. Its vegetation, and it doesn't always matter to people if it's buckthorn. Conservancy groups look at things differently. They focus on saving significant trees and open spaces by eliminating buckthorn, but then you see houses and cars. Deer seem to like to hide in the buckthorn. Other invasive species move in when you take the buckthorn out. Garlic mustard, thistle, burdock all like to grow once buckthorn is removed. It is important for the task force to come to a consensus as to what level could be maintained.

Mike G. stated that a practical way of looking at this is that cutting buckthorn is a lifetime pursuit. There is about 30 acres.

Courtney Marschalek said that there is four acres of woods near Hartland North. She has been clearing buckthorn from that area and the children have been planting new trees. It is a lifetime pursuit. That is four acres, how do you do 30 acres or more? What is the success rate for those who have tried to clear buckthorn?

Mike G. added that when the machine goes in and cuts everything, it looks like a war zone. Then you can treat the stumps and burn what is there. You need to get a permit from the DNR to burn. The most recent burning was done by the Village at their cost.

The discussions the task force has will eventually turn into a report that recommends to the Village Board (for example) that the Village has “70 acres” of environmental areas that need attention. We think that you should do “X, Y, and Z “. And we think it’s going to use these resources whether it’s financial resources or volunteer resources. That’s the guidance that the Village Board is looking for. The report will tell them that this is what the task force has learned over the last year and this is how they think it should be handled. The task force should set priorities.

David Pride suggested opening up about 50 feet of the area on the Penbrook path at the bottom of the hill near the bench. However, it was brought up that that might be hard to maintain.

It was suggested for Penbrook that trails be made with cutting buckthorn to make the trails wider.

Bark River Park:

If you take the center line of Church Street and extend it to HWY 16, the Village owns to the west and the school owns to the east.

A good portion of Bark River Park is in the flood plain and a lot of what is in the park is dictated by that. Most likely the bathrooms would not be able to be built there now.

The question was raised as to what could be done to feature the river. One idea was to get rid of garlic mustard and plant native plants. Mike G. stated that the Village does treat for garlic mustard in various areas. We hire Frontier FS to spray the larger volume areas. The Village has several people on our staff that are licensed with the State of Wisconsin to spray, but when there is a very large area, we feel more comfortable with professional spraying. They track weather, they track the type of chemical, the amount of acres that they spray, they provide us with documents when they are done and they post it. The Village does the same thing, but in smaller areas. Frontier uses a vegetation control that doesn’t kill grasses. The task force may want to have some guidelines regarding the different vegetation control chemicals for the general public to use.

There is not enough land to put a trail in the wooded area behind the ball field. The trail would need to be ADA accessible – all trails need to be 8 feet wide. There is only 2 or three feet to the river’s edge.

Penbrook would be a different situation. It would be a natural trail, not a hard surface trail. The land is too steep for the grades for ADA, which can only drop one inch per foot. A wheelchair accessible overlook could possibly be built at the bottom of the hill. There is a similar overlook at the Maple Wayside.

Joliet:

There is a half-court basketball court in Joliet. The metal bench in that park has jagged areas where the lawn mower hits the end cap and it is sharp and dangerous. There is also a playground and baseball field. The park trees are surveyed.

Just for information, the tree surveyor has found over 300 Ash trees that need to be removed due to Emerald Ash Borer. He would like us to treat about 150 more at a cost of \$10,000 per year for the next six years and every five years after that. That will be part of the upcoming Village Board decision.

Carol Zahorik thought there should be a bike rack in Joliet Park and she would like to know who Louis Joliet was and why the park was named after him.

Sunnyslope:

Sunnyslope Park is a passive park. There used to be a small playground there, but it was removed because it was too close to the road. There are a couple of benches there now.

Carol Zahorik suggested fruit trees and native bushes could be added to the park. Mike G. stated that typically the Village doesn't plant fruit trees. They are messy and they attract hornets. She noticed there was not a sign. Mike G. said that it was a cost saving decision. Some of the trees in the park were donated by the memory care facility, Hartland Place, across the street. Since the developer had to remove some trees on his property for the development, they were replaced in-kind and planted in Sunnyslope Park.

Castle:

Castle Park is a fairly passive trail system with playground equipment and one shelter. A couple years ago a group from GE put in an exercise trail for young kids. There is no bike rack in Castle Park. It was reported that there was some thistle after the signs as you go up the hill. There is a nice Oak tree at the top of the hill. The significant trees are surveyed. It's a fairly open park. Those trails were recently repaved. They were one of the first trails put in. Typically you repave a trail after 24 years – maintenance every eight years. That is similar to our roads, which are scheduled every 24 years. It's the life of asphalt. If you walk the Maple Avenue trail you will find several areas where roots are coming up through the path. The concern is that if we cut the roots the tree will die. However, from a safety perspective we can't have that trip hazard.

Mike G. stated that the Village could phase in more bike racks over time. One of the challenges we have is this year for the fourth year in a row our budget is to be at zero percent increase. That doesn't leave space for any additions. However, that doesn't mean we shouldn't put it on a list and consider it. Perhaps someone might want to make a donation, or we have volunteer groups that ask to do a project. The Village likes to put bikes racks in concrete because we don't have to mow or string trim around it.

Hartbrook Park:

It was noticed that the fences in Hartbrook Park are older and rusty. Mike G. stated that that area was filled in in the late 1970's when they rebuilt Highway 16. That's when the park was made. It was mentioned that there are some very large trees in Hartbrook. Unfortunately the biggest and oldest tree in the Village was a Burr Oak tree in Hartbrook West and it died. The trunk is about 57 inches in diameter and is scheduled for removal. Hartbrook has an environmental corridor along the western side straddling the river. We have surveyed some of the more significant trees. It's important

to note that the Village has done significant work clearing that area. There is a chip trail along the edge.

It was mentioned that there are two metal benches on concrete pads near the river. When Mr. Pride sat on them he almost fell forward. Mike G stated that the DPW struggles with putting benches near the river because it is unstable soil. A bench at Nixon Park was finally removed. The DPW would fix it and it would tip, time and again. There are two options –the benches can be moved back from the river, or they can be removed. We like having them at the river so people can sit and look at the river, fish or rest after walking the trails. They can be straightened out, but they won't stay. The Village did spray for garlic mustard in Hartbrook.

The work that the Village did in Hartbrook West should be a map for other wooded areas in the Village. It's a very nice area. North of this area is private property and is separated by barbed wire.

Nixon Park:

The water lilies in the pond this year were natural growth. The pond has been dredged every ten years. The silt that is dredged has to stay on site, per the DNR. Silt is a hazardous compound because of the street run off into the river. It's quite costly to dredge it and find a spot to place the silt and restore it. The last two times we put the silt east of the road into the park where the soccer field used to be. But we can't do that anymore.

The garlic mustard, burdock and thistle next to the path on Cottonwood going into Nixon are on private property.

The splash pad has been great for the community. It's heavily used by people far and wide. From the DPW perspective, it's a lot more maintenance and cost that we don't recoup.

Dave Pride asked how often the Village waters the dusty baseball fields. Mike G. stated that the Village does not water fields for grass growth. HAAA waters Bark River Field maybe twice a week and that's just the infield. The other fields occasionally are watered and that is just to keep the dust down, it is not enough water to run off. We don't water any of the fields or parks except Centennial Football Field, in order to keep it lush so it doesn't get destroyed when the Chiefs play on it.

Carol Zahorik mentioned that she would like to see a bike rack at Cottonwood Wayside and Maple Wayside. It was clarified that the Village does not own Maple Wayside.

Mr. Pride asked if the Village is getting enough compensation through user fees. He is not clear on how fields are rented. Tim Hallquist suggested that for the next ECOS meeting, park facility applications should be brought so that user fees can be discussed with those not familiar with them.

Dave Cox said that in accordance with the policies set by the Park Board and the Village Board, we do not collect "enough" fees from park uses. But a policy decision has

been made that the taxpayers cover some of that cost as a quality of life issue. That is also similar to our rec programs.

4. Discussion of Key Themes to be included in the final deliverable (Task Force Report) and further discussion of the work plan

The northwest park is a piece of land west of Arrowhead High School and is a passive park of about 5 1/2 acres. Trees on this parcel have not been surveyed.

Carol Zahorik mentioned that there could be paths and benches on the land. It's completely untouched and unmarked at this time. There is a storm water retention pond at the tip of the property. The Village's limited resources have prevented us from surveying the trees at the northwest park. In the past, we didn't look at the heavily treed areas, we mainly looked at the free standing trees. Logging roads would have to be cut to get into the property. This land was a deal to swap land with Arrowhead to put Campus Drive on their property, in exchange for giving them some property that was park for the road so they could extend their trail for cross country. At some point, finances permitting, we could put hiking trails in the northwest park. Our Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan doesn't call for anything there at this point. This land is surrounded by a single farm.

List of Parks to concentrate on:

Bark River West
Cottonwood Wayside
Hartbrook
Hartbrook West
Penbrook
Nottingham
Centennial
Northwest Park

Things to focus on:

Planting some of the good trees and bushes getting rid of invasive species
The identification of significant trees
Installing unpaved paths
An emphasis on prioritizing and getting access to these nature areas
Maintenance is a huge issue, especially with costs

Carol Zahorik asked, do we want paths in Nottingham? That could be left for last. We do want paths in Penbrook.

Are student volunteers ever used, or is it too dangerous? Mike G. stated that we are cautious with letting people use chainsaws. It's dangerous.

Things to think about:

How do you accomplish some of these things and what is the impact to the property owners around it. For instance Penbrook Park. The park area isn't directly behind

properties, but the road into Penbrook has a line of invasive species. If you clear that out, the homeowners have a direct view of the ball fields. Every situation is unique. We will need to think about it. There will need to be a process that is sensitive to the environment and the neighbors.

Education of Homeowners is a theme that should be discussed.

5. Future meeting topics and meeting schedule

a. Meeting Topics

Penbrook Park will be the focus of the next meeting.

b. Next meeting: October 6, 2016, 7:00pm

6. Adjourn

Motion (Marschalek/Bonness) to adjourn. Carried (6-0). Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by
Recording Secretary,

Lynn Meyer
Deputy Clerk