SPECIAL TRAILS AND PARKS COMMITTEE  
June 12, 2017  
Minutes

Members Present: Banas, Grebner, Sebolt, Maiville (left at 6:42 p.m.), and Koenig (arrived at 6:32 p.m., left at 7:00 p.m.)

Members Absent: Naeyaert and Nolan

Others Present: Jared Cypher, Tim Morgan, Bill Conklin, Jim Snell, Tanya Moore, Mike Unsworth, Jessy Gregg, Jonathan Schelke, Bob Peña, Liz Kane and others

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Banas at 6:01 p.m. in Personnel Conference Room “D & E” of the Human Services Building, 5303 S. Cedar Street, Lansing, Michigan.

Approval of the May 18, 2017 Minutes

MOVED BY COMM. GREBNER, SUPPORTED BY COMM. MAIVILLE, TO APPROVE THE MAY 18, 2017 SPECIAL TRAILS AND PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. Absent: Commissioners Nolan, Naeyaert and Koenig

Additions to the Agenda

None.

Limited Public Comment

Mike Unsworth, Tri-County Bicycle Association Advocacy Committee Chair, stated he was glad to see an emphasis on trails in the implementation of the trails and parks millage. He further stated he agreed with the adjustments that were made to the application process and the Committee’s efforts to integrate smaller communities into the process.

Mr. Unsworth stated that with the passage of a County-wide Complete Streets policy through the Special Complete Streets Committee, the County was taking the first step into integrating non-motorized transportation into their plans. He further stated that TCBA envisioned a network of trails, and roads where they could not have trails, across the region.

Mr. Unsworth stated that integrated roads should have safe shoulders or bike lanes and routes needed to be marked. He further stated the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission had a good long-term prioritization system, which gave flexibility for new opportunities to be funded through their programs.
Jonathan Schelke, Park Commission, distributed a map of the current layout of the Lakeland Trail that had been discussed at a previous Committee meeting. He provided information about the trail, and stated it would be an important trail to be connected to in the future to connect to other trails across the State, and he hoped the County would want to be involved in it.

Chairperson Banas asked the Committee if they would be willing to come back for another meeting, to discuss the suggestions given tonight.

The Committee was in agreement to meet another time.

1. **Presentation of Spreadsheet of All Approved Projects Underway** (Tim Morgan/Spicer)

Tanya Moore, Spicer Group Landscape Architect, introduced the Ingham County Trails and Parks Millage - Status Update spreadsheet layout. She stated that a project status report would be filled out by communities on a quarterly basis.

Chairperson Banas asked Mr. Morgan to update the Committee about the completed Aurelius trails project.

Tim Morgan, Parks Director, updated the Committee and stated the Aurelius trails project had been completed last week, because their contractor was able to squeeze them in as soon as the contract had been signed. He further stated because they were able to get it done so quickly, they did not have to do the project in phases, and they had already received the reimbursement worksheets.

Commissioner Grebner stated he would like to see additional columns and rows in the spreadsheet, including lines for trail segments where there were no current projects, and specific information about each trail segment.

Chairperson Banas stated they already had that.

Mr. Morgan stated Commissioner Grebner was referring to Figure 24 from the report.

Commissioner Grebner stated the spreadsheet would be a combination of the figure and the spreadsheet, so all of the information could be put together in one place that would be regularly updated. He further stated he would also like to see codes to give more information about trails, for instance, PASER ratings on the condition of the trail and when it was last updated.

Commissioner Grebner stated he was trying to get the County to move toward having a database where they ran everything and it was not just for display.

2. **Long-Term Project Planning and Rolling Deadlines** (Discussion/Recommendation)

Jim Snell, Transportation Manager, Tri-County Regional Planning: TRC’s 6-year plan and “illustrative list” and trail requests for federal funding before Tri-County
Tim Morgan/Spicer Group: ICPC recommendations for a multi-year approach

Chairperson Banas introduced Jim Snell and the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission’s processes and goals.

Jim Snell, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission Transportation Director, distributed a handout to the Committee and described the handout. He highlighted the project implementation process for a non-motorized transportation plan in the Tri-County area.

Mr. Snell stated the top-ranked projects, which were decided by the TCRPC’s overall goals, would be funded by their federal funding dollars. He continued to present the handout to the Committee.

Chairperson Banas asked Mr. Snell how a long-range trails plan, if the County decided to develop one, would come together with a planning document and an illustrative list.

Mr. Snell stated the County should look at what was desired in the County, plot the projects on a map, and invite advocates to participate in planning process. He further stated on a larger scale, they needed to look at their first priorities and what would affect the most people, especially gaps in the trails system, to maximize what had been already established for the trails system.

Commissioner Koenig arrived at 6:32 p.m.

Mr. Snell stated a tiered system would identify what was important to the County, like recreation access, air quality, and other issues. He further stated once the County had a list of priorities, they could rank the proposals based on those.

Chairperson Banas stated the Parks Department was working with Spicer Group to determine those priorities and map out where the County wanted to go. She further stated she knew the TCRPC had great internal resources, including a mapping system, and she asked Mr. Snell if he would be willing to help the Parks Department with mapping the County’s trails.

Mr. Snell stated he would be willing to help the County to an extent, as the TCRPC saw itself as a resource for the Tri-County area, and Ingham County was a big part of that area. He further stated their mapping department was very good and they had great staff working in it.

Commissioner Sebolt asked if Mr. Snell knew where the funding for the long-term projects lay, with the current state of the federal funding bill.

Mr. Snell stated that the current transportation budget was valid through 2020, and although some services or departments could be consolidated, he thought it was safe to say the funding would be available for projects through 2020.

Jared Cypher, Deputy Controller, asked if the TCRPC had a process to move projects approved in their four-year plan around in their timeline if a community could not start or finish a project in the expected time.
Mr. Snell stated projects were approved as part of a four-year plan, so they could push up or move back projects within that four-year span if they needed to. He further stated the process was also rolling, so they could pick the project back up in a later year if they knew it would be completed then, or add it to the list of projects and say they were still committed to the project down the line when it was able to start.

Mr. Cypher asked if the TCRPC needed to take action to move projects around on the timeline.

Mr. Snell stated the TCRPC did not need to take action if the project timeline stayed within the four years, and the scope of the project and cost did not change. He further stated the TCRPC would have to move another project into that slot, so they could maintain their fiscal restraint and make sure they did not lose their funding.

Chairperson Banas asked what level of involvement was available for the different types of funding, including federal and state funding.

Mr. Snell stated the TCRPC had control over what happened with their funds, because the area was over a certain size and was considered a Transportation Management Area. He further stated that MDOT had its own discretionary fund that they also used to help fund projects, and those projects needed to have conditional approval, so they needed to be ready to go when it was time.

Commissioner Grebner stated the spreadsheet they had previously discussed had a map associated with each trail segment.

Mr. Snell stated having inventory of the trails in the County was good for the County to continue their planning of the trails. He further stated the TCRPC also had MDOT mapping information, which they could provide to the County as well.

Commissioner Maiville left at 6:42 p.m.

Chairperson Banas stated she knew Mr. Morgan was also involved in the TCRPC’s non-motorized plan. She thanked Mr. Snell for his input.

3. **Addressing Needs of Smaller Communities:**
   *Recommendations from Special Committee on Trails and Parks*
   Upcoming Stakeholder Meeting and Small Communities Break-out (June 29)

Mr. Morgan stated in the first two rounds of the trails and parks millage application process, the County had a meeting with stakeholders, where frequently asked questions were answered as part of a presentation and the application was discussed. He further stated in the next round, he was hoping to have a small communities session in addition to the general session, where Sarah Nicholls, Park Commission Chair, present at the meeting and help communities with their application process.
Chairperson Banas stated the Committee had heard that smaller communities did not feel like they were part of the process, which was why she suggested putting aside some of the trails and parks millage money for smaller projects. She further stated even if the trail in this smaller community did not immediately connect to another part of the trails system, it got the community involved in the process and provided recreation opportunities to their residents.

Commissioner Grebner asked if the money would be set aside at the Park Commission level, or the Board of Commissioners level.

Chairperson Banas stated that the County Park Commission reviewed applications and made recommendations, but she thought there should be specific criteria for smaller communities because they could not compete with the larger projects. She further stated the smaller projects would be reviewed as the other projects were, moving in a parallel track with the larger grants, from the Park Commission, to the County Services Committee, to the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Grebner stated he thought it was a good idea to have the Park Commission have a separate program in its mind to take into account smaller communities, and the Board of Commissioners would then take that into their final account. He further stated he thought the Board of Commissioners ultimately would make a set of free-wheeling decisions that were fluid, and he was not in favor of constraining the criteria to certain dollar amounts for these projects.

Commissioner Grebner stated he did not think there should be a cap on the funding amount for smaller communities' projects, because there was one pot of millage money and there was going to be a ranking of priority by the Board of Commissioners that would have to be acted upon. He further stated he did not see a specific amount set aside working in that process unless the Board of Commissioners was really committed to it.

Chairperson Banas stated the whole point of the discussion was to open up the process to engage more communities. She further stated the Park Commission had not approved smaller communities’ projects so far, because the County’s greatest needs were to refurbish, repair, and connect larger population centers, but their intent now was to provide more flexibility.

Chairperson Banas stated the separate funding for smaller communities did not have to be a hard cap on the funding, but they should welcome smaller communities to provide trails and services across the County. She further stated she did not want to set aside the funds for smaller communities because she wanted the votes if they renewed the trails and parks millage, but because she thought it was the fair thing to do.

Commissioner Grebner stated he was concerned there were rules in effect they might not know yet, because the situation had not arisen. He further stated if a community did not engage with the County to create trails and parks, either due to small staff or lack of interest, the County should have a different plan to help build trails around or through the community so that part of the map did not get ignored.

Chairperson Banas when the County first implemented the trails and parks millage, there was so much need around communities that wanted to be involved, the County wanted to make the
biggest impact with their money. She further stated the County did not see the immediate need to encourage communities to get involved, because there was so much need to begin with, but that may change over time as they build up their County-wide system.

4. **Millage Assistant in Parks Department: Suggestions for scope of work**
   Tim Morgan and Spicer Group

Chairperson Banas stated she would like the Committee to discuss the idea of bringing another staff person to the Parks Department to help with the trails and parks millage work.

Mr. Morgan stated the County had originally hired Spicer Group to help with some of the tasks associated with the trails and parks millage. He further stated there were about twenty tasks that he had laid out for the trails and parks millage duties, and Spicer Group was currently consulting with eight or more of those duties.

Mr. Morgan stated the twelve other items on the list needed attention as well, and they were taking up a large portion of his time. He further stated the Parks Department did not have a deputy director, and the other staff was being taxed by having to do the lifting on these projects as well.

Mr. Morgan stated since the County had hired Spicer Group and had been engaging throughout the community on the trails and parks millage, they had thirty-five contracts on hand after the last round of applications.

Commissioner Koenig left at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Moore stated that when they compared the County’s capacity to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources or MDOT, which had four or more grant coordinators, this role was taxing to the single Parks Director. She further stated when Spicer Group responded to the County’s RFP, they had negotiated the list of twenty tasks down to eight, but the list of tasks had been slowly increasing over time.

Chairperson Banas asked Ms. Moore exactly what Spicer Group worked on for the trails and parks millage.

Ms. Moore stated they worked on cost estimates, determining which tasks were viable, the follow-up and monitoring of projects, post-completion audits of projects, bridge engineering and expertise, wayfinding, grant writing, and updating trails and parks maps.

Chairperson Banas asked what else needed to happen to make this a better situation for Spicer Group and the Parks Department.

Mr. Cypher stated the most important thing for this position would be to help Mr. Morgan in the office, and pay greater attention to the details of the applications and approved projects. He further stated from a supervisory standpoint, he would like to see Mr. Morgan focus more on the
parks management side of his job; although the parks managers were doing a good job keeping up the parks, the Parks Director also needed to be involved.

Mr. Morgan stated this position would also be able to provide assistance to communities partaking in the trails and parks millage, and to get out and work with a community to partner or foster potential MOU’s between smaller townships that might not want to participate and adjacent participating communities or community partners. He provided examples of a type of MOU the position could foster, like the one between the County and the City of Lansing for the River Trail, where the County took care of as much of the trail as they could reach from Mount Hope to Jolly Road, and then the City of Lansing took care of the rest.

Mr. Morgan stated the position could also help with oversight of projects, and identifying areas where gaps in the trails system needed to be closed. He further stated his current office staff was getting pulled into these tasks while also still performing their regular duties, and it was taxing for them.

Mr. Morgan stated he was also asking Spicer Group to do more than what was originally agreed to, which they were not complaining about, but it was not fair. He further stated he had an entire Parks Department to run, and he needed to have his boots on the ground more than he currently was able.

Mr. Morgan stated he was working on a draft of duties for the position, and under his current proposal, he would not suggest doing away with Spicer Group, because they would be able to continue doing the engineering and planning aspects, while this person would be more focused on the details and could focus on updating relevant data, like the PASER rating.

Chairperson Banas stated the Committee would hear more throughout the process, and she acknowledged it was a tough time to discuss adding staff because of the stresses on the County budget. She further stated this position would be millage-funded, and the whole point was to help communities and extend the trails system in the County.

Discussion.

Commissioner Grebner stated he was worried that people were already thinking about the duties for the position without any input from others. He further stated the position should be thought of as a trails program assistant, where they were not solely focused on project applications and financial transactions, but also that they would be able to get out and ride the trails 5-10% of their time to become familiar with the trails system.

Commissioner Grebner stated that while the County did not own the whole trails system, staff had not experienced the trails system regularly, so having this position that was not in charge of the engineering or contract management tasks, experience the trails was a good idea.

Discussion.
Chairperson Banas stated the County also had the recently approved trail ambassador program that worked with volunteers to have an ear on the ground on the trails, and members of the Park Commission were frequently out on the trails. She further stated it would be great to have this position provide rapid response on the trails when it was needed, but there was currently input from the community on the trails.

Commissioner Sebolt stated he thought the word "millage" should be included in the position title, because it was being funded by the trails and parks millage dollars. He further stated they would have to be mindful of the tasks that fell to this position, given it was funded by trails and parks millage dollars.

Discussion.

5. Review of Application and Scoring Criteria Changes from Parks Commission

Commissioner Grebner stated as long as this criteria was thought of as being the Park Commission’s way to make sure every application had what it needed to have, and staff had used it as a checklist, that was fine. He further stated as far as final approval by the Board of Commissioners, the decision they had to make was what the greatest benefit per dollar would be.

Commissioner Grebner stated in thinking about public work and taxation, the underlying issue was to find the project with the greatest benefit per dollar, but that was not in the current criteria. He further stated the cost and amount of people a project would impact should be taken into account, but he was not proposing the change to the scoring criteria to take into account cost, as it was already included implicitly.

Commissioner Grebner stated it was easier to make the consideration of impact and cost a political decision at the end of the process. He further stated the projects that would be most attractive to the Board of Commissioners would be those that did not cost as much, and had a lot of benefit to residents.

Commissioner Grebner stated the Board of Commissioners would have to make a more fluid final set of decisions.

Commissioner Sebolt stated he had previously suggested that the 0-9% matched funding be changed to give a few points to projects that had between 1-9% matched funding. He further stated that some communities might put a lot of work into getting an 8% match in funding, and by only awarding the projects that received 10% or higher match in funds, they sent the message that it was not worth their time.

Jesse Gregg, Parks Commission, stated the criteria used to award points only to 50% or more of matched funding. She further stated that some projects with zero matched funding were funded in previous application rounds, so that criteria did not take a project out of the running.

Ms. Gregg stated she would be fine with zero matched funds being scored as zero in this category, and giving one or two points to 1-9% matched funds.
Mr. Schelke stated he did not know if this matched funding criteria mattered too much, since the Park Commission had previously been able to come to a consensus quickly about which projects they did or did not want to approve.

Commissioner Sebolt stated his suggestion was to acknowledge the efforts of, for instance, a nonprofit from a smaller township that was able to pull together $10,000 for a project.

Mr. Morgan asked what Commissioner Sebolt suggested for the scoring.

Commissioner Sebolt stated he suggested scoring zero points for zero matched funds, but give two points for 1-9% matched funds.

Mr. Morgan stated he would make the change for the next Committee meeting and the Committee could vote on it then.

Announcements

Chairperson Banas stated the next Special Trails and Parks Committee meeting would be June 22, 28, or 29, 2017 and she would let the Commissioners know which it would be soon. She further stated at the next meeting, she would like to put together a list of recommendations that the Committee mostly saw eye-to-eye on.

Public Comment

Mr. Unsworth stated he thought the recommendations of the Park Commission did not tie the hands of the Board of Commissioners, but the Board of Commissioners’ final decisions should be reasoned. He further stated that by leaving wiggle room for special projects in the trails and parks millage, he did not think those smaller communities’ projects would get slighted, but it could take some time for the County to get around to them.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

BARB BYRUM, CLERK OF THE BOARD