

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**

Monday April 3, 2023 at 6:00 pm
Garfield Township
3848 Veterans Drive
Traverse City, MI 49684
Ph: (231) 941-1620

AGENDA

ORDER OF BUSINESS

**Call Meeting to Order
Pledge of Allegiance
Roll Call of Board Members**

1. Public Comment

Public Comment Guidelines:

Any person shall be permitted to address a meeting of The Parks and Recreation Commission, which is required to be open to the public under the provision of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, as amended. (MCLA 15.261, et.seq.) Public Comment shall be carried out in accordance with the following Board Rules and Procedures: a.) any person wishing to address the Board is requested to state his or her name and address. b.) No person shall be allowed to speak more than once on the same matter, excluding time needed to answer Commissioner's questions. Where constrained by available time the Chairperson may limit the amount of time each person will be allowed to speak to (3) minutes. 1.) The Chairperson may at his or her own discretion, extend the amount of time any person is allowed to speak. 2.) Whenever a Group wishes to address a Committee, the Chairperson may require that the Group designate a spokesperson; the Chairperson shall control the amount of time the spokesperson shall be allowed to speak when constrained by available time.

2. Review and Approval of the Agenda – Conflicts of Interest

3. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes – March 6, 2023

4. Correspondence

a. Correspondence - Commons Natural Area Mountain Bike Sub-Committee Report

5. Reports

- a. Commissioner Reports
- b. Staff Report / Updates
 - i. Parks Steward Report

6. Old Business

- a. PD 2023-35 – Commons Natural Area Design Plan – Grants Update and Next Steps
- b. PD 2023-36 – Mountain Bike Subcommittee Update

7. New Business

- a. Park Rentals and Fees – Discussion

8. Public Comment

9. Items for Next Agenda – Monday June 5, 2023

10. Adjournment

Garfield Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting to individuals with disabilities upon the provision of reasonable advance notice to Garfield Township. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact Garfield Township by writing or calling Lanie McManus, Clerk, Ph: (231) 941-1620, or TDD #922-4412.

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GARFIELD
PARKS and RECREATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
March 6, 2023**

Roll Call of Commission Members:

Present: Denise Schmuckal, Art Bukowski, Andy Hoort, William Scott, and Chris DeGood (6:08)

Absent and Excused: Fern Spence and Chris Remy

Staff Present: Deputy Planning Director Steve Hannon, Parks Steward Sean Kehoe

Call to Order: Trustee Schmuckal called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all in attendance.

1. Public Comment (6:07)

None

2. Review and Approval of the Agenda – Conflicts of Interest (6:07)

Commissioners noted the date listed on the agenda was Tuesday March 6, 2023 and that the agenda should be amended so the date is Monday March 6, 2023.

Hoort moved and Bukowski seconded to approve the agenda as amended.

Yeas: Hoort, Bukowski, Scott, Schmuckal

Nays: None

3. Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 6, 2023 (6:07)

Scott moved and Hoort seconded to approve the minutes of February 6, 2023.

Yeas: Scott, Hoort, Bukowski, Schmuckal

Nays: None

4. Correspondence (6:07)

None

5. Reports (6:08)

a. Commissioner Reports

Schmuckal stated that the recent Planning Commission/Township Board Joint meeting was very informative.

b. Staff Report/Updates

i. Parks Steward Report

Kehoe submitted the Parks Steward Report in writing and added that a new countertop was ordered for the Silver Lake Recreation

Area bathrooms. Clearing was done for the dog park at River East Recreation Area and a septic tank may already exist underneath the park. Engineers are working to locate the possible tank. Kids Creek Park tree planting materials have been delivered.

Hannon stated that the 2023-2027 Parks and Recreation Master Plan has been accepted by the Michigan DNR.

6. Old Business

a. PD 2023-26 – Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area Design Plan – Grants Update (6:13)

The MNRTF grant application is for part of the “Conservation Recreation” Trail in the northern portion of the Commons Natural Area property. This trail will be designed as a universally accessible (UA) trail and will form an approximately 1.4-mile loop. GIS data has been received for this portion of the trail.

Part of the grant application process is an Accessibility Review including input from people with disabilities, disability advocacy groups, and other organizations which serve people with disabilities. Staff met with two representatives from Cordia at Grand Traverse Commons, a senior living organization, and had a discussion with a representative from Disability Network Northern Michigan.

Staff drafted an outreach letter and draft letter of support as outreach to area stakeholders. Drawings and details of the proposed trail are being reviewed by the Township Engineer. Commissioners discussed public input and other entities to reach out to for possible input. Staff will send out the draft grant application to Commissioners.

7. New Business

a. PD 2023-27 - Mountain Bike Subcommittee Update (6:33)

The mountain bike subcommittee held their first meeting on Wednesday February 22, 2023 at Township Hall, including representatives from the Copper Ridge Riders Association (CRRRA), Northern Michigan Mountain Bike Association (NMMBA), and others. The subcommittee discussed conducting an inventory of the existing mountain biking trails. Staff and subcommittee members will walk the trails in the spring to gather more information on the condition of the existing trails and to determine if any trails need to be closed off.

Commissioners discussed fundraising for future trail projects and for the Commons Natural Area in general. Commissioners indicated that any fundraising efforts should include all community members and potential trail users, not just the mountain bikers. Commissioners discussed the idea of stakeholders forming a 501.c.3 nonprofit for fundraising activities, or two such nonprofits to allow for one to focus on mountain biking trails and one to focus on hiking and walking trails.

8. Public Comment (7:09)

None

9. Items for Next Agenda – April 3, 2023 (7:09)

Items may include a synopsis of the grant applications and an update from the mountain bike subcommittee. Commissioners asked if the next meeting should be canceled if the only agenda items are updates. Staff will coordinate with the Chair to determine if the meeting will be canceled.

10. Adjournment

DeGood adjourned the meeting at 7:15 pm.

**Commons Natural Area
Mountain Bike Sub-Committee Report**

Prepared for the Garfield Township Parks & Recreation Commission
Delivered on March 28, 2023

Sub-Committee Members:

Chris Remy
Andrew Farron
Levi Kyser
Heath Day
Tim Reicha
Earl Whitney
Earl Gervais

Summary:

The mountain bike initiative at the Commons Natural Area will entail two phases, first to reopen and maintain existing trails and second to develop a long-term mountain bike trail network per the master plan. The goal of this report is to establish background on the history and existing trail infrastructure and offer recommendations to complete Phase I and create a starting point for Phase II planning.

Background:

Since the early 2000s, the State Hospital grounds have been utilized by passionate local mountain bikers as a place to meet friends and build skills. With the 'freeride mountain biking' movement in infancy, Modern Extreme Sports (MESS) brought some of the first downhill specific mountain bikes to Northern Michigan. A dedicated group of riders took to the underutilized and virtually unregulated hills, building onto existing trails. Lumber was brought in and numerous wood structures were erected specifically in the area we now call the State 40.

Since the initial days, conversations with the DNR has led to the removal of these wooden features and numerous problematic trails near heavy traffic areas but the maintenance of existing trails was approved. Since then, a new large jump trail has emerged but otherwise 'rogue free-ride trail building' has been minimal.

While there really are three separate 'hubs' currently used by the mountain bike community, the main area of our focus will be what we call the State 40. It contains the most dense assortment of trails and is out of the way of the other hiking and recreation trails. For these reasons, Garfield Township has identified this area as the ideal location for the majority of the mountain bike specific infrastructure, including a new future trailhead.



The State 40: Onion, Log Jam, Double Bogey, Courtesy Flush, Goldilocks & the ‘up’ trail.

The State 40 trails all start near the property line of Foxcraft subdivision. They currently run mostly East until rejoining at the Copper Ridge parking lot and consist of 5 downhill specific trails. Four of the trails are deemed advanced, with numerous berms, descents and small to medium jump features. One trail is identified as Expert (Goldilocks) with large - high consequence gap jumps that were erected much more recently than the others. There is a dedicated ‘up’ trail (Hike-a-bike) cutting through the middle of the downhill trails that is well utilized to keep traffic directional.

While there are numerous safety concerns, erosion issues, usage conflicts and wayfinding shortcomings, it is noted that these trails have sustained for nearly 20 years. This is due to countless volunteer hours from the local mountain bike community to remove downed trees, leaf blow and repair features as they erode and settle.

There is an organized group of individuals known as the Copper Ridge Riders Association that utilize a Facebook group page to plan group rides, meet ups and notify others when a hazard exists. This community of 450+ members is expected to play a large role in the improvement and upkeep of the existing trails at the Commons.

As of fall 2022, a tragic accident occurred where a mountain biker collided with a tree, resulting in a fatality. As a result, the trails in this zone were made unusable by the Garfield Township staff until a well-developed plan could be created, reviewed and implemented. It is the hope of the subcommittee that these trails can be reopened in the spring of 2023 to allow the continued recreation on this property. It is the hope of the Garfield Township Board to cease rogue trail building on this property, which the subcommittee also feels will be most likely by reopening some of these existing trails.

Recommendations:

This subcommittee met with Garfield Township personnel on site on 3/22/23 to coordinate an interim plan that would meet the standards of Garfield Township while also catering to the local mountain bike community until the proposed contracted trails are completed. Below is the summary of our suggestions. Once approved by the Garfield Township Board, we will utilize a supervised group of volunteers to execute the plan below. The proposed timeline is May-June of 2023.

The three main concerns of this group are as follows:

1. High consequence gap jumps that are unmarked and do not have alternative routes.
2. High speed trail crossings that are unmarked and could cause a collision.
3. Negative and dangerous interactions with other trail users such as hikers.

The numerous meetings and on-site walk through focused on these issues. General minimization of risk and liability is a goal of every stakeholder involved in this project.

We are proposing the following trail changes to address these goals:

- Removal of Goldilocks trail. This is the most recent trail built and consists of high-consequence gap jumps ranging from 8-20 feet. The trail also crosses numerous other trails and has a high-risk for collision. While the large features have made it a favorite of many local riders, it does not meet the safety standards of this group.
- Removal of Foxcraft trail. This is currently the only intermediate trail on this portion of the property and was also the first trail created in the State 40. While we would love to keep it for heritage and diversity purposes, it has eroded severely over the years and also crosses two other trails. We hope to pay homage to this trail during the formal rebuild in the coming years.
- Reroute the ending of Double Bogey trail. Currently, the end of this trail crosses the two track that pedestrians and dogs often use, causing conflict and potential for a collision. There is already a connection made from this trail into the end of Log Jam but a formal closure of the original ending is required.
- Reroute the ending of Onion and Courtesy Flush trails (combined into one trail at this point). This area has a high-speed trail crossing with the pedestrian two-track and has already been redirected to feed into the end of Log Jam. A formal closure of the original

ending is required, likely including erosion control measures such as water bars and grass seed.

- Create a dedicated up-trail near the parking lot. For the first 100 feet, the route up utilizes the downhill trails. Beyond that point, the users have a dedicated, safe route to the top. We suggest raking in a new short section of trail to avoid users from going up the directional downhill trails.

Signage - This committee will be providing an updated map of this area once the changes are agreed upon. Trail difficulty should be displayed to inform those unfamiliar that this area contains advanced trails. This should be displayed at both the bottom of the 'up trail' and the top hub. At the top, safety messages should also be displayed such as the industry standard Ride Smart poster shown below.



The downhill trails should also have signage at the bottom, deterring uphill traffic for both bikers and hikers. Similarly, the uphill trail should be labeled as such at the bottom (open for both bikers and pedestrians) with a 'Bikes Do Not Enter' sign at the top.

There are a few trails that cross the 'up' trail and these intersections shall be signed with 'Caution - Trail Crossing' signs for the downhill trails and small 'STOP' signs on the pedestrian trail. Note that these crossing locations offer high visibility for both parties, greatly reducing the risk of a collision.

Lastly, any ap jump should be signed as such 5-10 feet prior to the feature. This is an industry standard and volunteers have already implemented some of these at these trails, shown below.



Trees can be used to install most of these signs however some posts will be needed. It is the recommendation of this committee to use flexible stakes to avoid injury if they are struck. Ride-around trails have naturally formed around most of the jumps and should continue to be maintained as such.

Execution plan:

Trail removal - For the removal of Goldilocks, it is important to relocate the logs used for the jumps to deter them from being restacked. We suggest moving them downhill 20+ feet and covering them with brush. For the removal of the crossings of the pedestrian 2 track, seeds and/or brush should be spread to help restore the trail back to vegetation and prevent further erosion.

Signing the trails as closed is also important. NMMBA has found the best luck by saying 'Closed for Restoration, Please Keep Off' with their logo underneath. It is polite and states a positive initiative that most people support. A physical obstacle is also highly recommended, possibly even a handful of them on Goldilocks to ensure sections are not reconstructed. Again, this is a popular trail and we all want our work being undone and it's best to physically deter as much as possible. This could be some nearby logs or Garfield Township staff could down some rotting or dead trees over the trail where deemed appropriate.

The labor for these modifications will be provided by the volunteer community with the direct oversight of subcommittee members Andrew Farron, Levi Kyser and Heath Day. They will report directly to subcommittee chair and Parks and Recreation Commission member Chris Remy. The progress and status will be monitored by Garfield Township employees Derek Morton & Sean Kehoe during their regular site visits and routine trail maintenance. The key members of the Subcommittee will continue to meet on a monthly basis through the completion of the approved work and the Board will have the ability to alter the course as deemed necessary.

Ongoing Maintenance Plan:

These trails require constant upkeep as fallen trees and leaves can be hazardous to riders. When a hazard is identified, it shall be posted to the Copper Ridge Riders Association page or emailed to the Parks and Recreation inbox. From there, administrators of the page or email shall coordinate maintenance. If chainsawing is required, the current policy is to notify Garfield Township Parks & Recreation to resolve the issues. Once completed, a 'trail clear' post should be put out on the facebook page from either a member or administrator. Signage should indicate to email parks@garfield-twp.com if maintenance is required.

The subcommittee recommends a chainsaw safety course for around 5 key volunteers to gain training and permission to use a chainsaw on this property to clear dead and downed trees across existing trails as needed. A signed waiver would also be required. It is an ongoing job and the bike community will likely be able to respond fastest to minimize injury or new rogue trails forming around the obstacle.



Leaf blowing is necessary in order to keep the trail clearly marked. It also makes obstacles and features much more visible to the riders and helps the trails drain properly. Leaf blowing can be

completed on existing trails only, specifically in the spring and fall. This will be a great task for the local volunteer community with coordination by the Subcommittee.

Fundraising:

This phase of the project would be primarily volunteer driven with the only foreseeable expenses being signage, sign posts and paid labor for tree clearing. Garfield Township would bear these initial costs, however there could be other means available if deemed necessary.

The subcommittee is in the intermediate stages of formalizing a fundraising plan for Phase II of mountain bike trail development at the Commons, involving paid professional trailbuilders adding new trails to the property. While this report does not focus on this future phase, some initial ideas can be provided.

After reviewing case studies of other similar initiatives, it is suggested that a nonprofit is established to help in two main ways. First, it would be a legal avenue for tax-deducted donations to be gathered and utilized as determined necessary. Second, it creates a formal organization that acts as the face of the fundraising campaign, historically being much more successful than requesting donations directly to a public entity.

The Northern Michigan Mountain Bike Association (NMMBA) is very familiar with this process and is already creating such a foundation for the mountain bike trail development at Hickory Hills. Subcommittee member and NMMBA President Tim Reicha has offered to help Garfield Township in the development, hopefully involving the use of an already existing registered 501c3.

The International Mountain Bike Association offers a 'Trail Accelerator Grant' for this exact type of project. It is the hope of the Subcommittee to pursue this grant as well as any others that are discovered during the campaign.

Additionally, the Subcommittee expects the local community to provide the bulk of the funding. This is through donations from mountain bikers, community philanthropists and companies that are supportive of the goals. To help this campaign, we suggest a professional marketing video consisting of a brief explanation of the proposed project and some interviews with local figures showing their support for this initiative. This would be shared on social media, through email groups of local bike shops and NMMBA and sent directly to potential donors. A list of these potential interested parties has already been started with over 50 names to date.

Ongoing Action Items:

Levi - oversee building of first section of 'up trail' once approved. From parking lot to existing dedicated up trail instead of using sections of the downhill trails.

Earl W - please help finalize the maintenance plan. Also more examples of signage suggestions including potential vendors. We could also really use some armor on the first steep section of

Log Jam / Foxcraft after the split from Onion. We thought maybe those graded concrete pavers that the NTN and other trails use for this purpose? Thoughts?

Tim - Big picture as well as the fundraising portion. Can NMMBA possibly help establish a nonprofit for this fundraising campaign?

Heath - Help organize 1-2 volunteer days this spring? Weekday evenings or weekends? Could we grill out some food? Could you find loaner tools from other groups or the Township? Any other thoughts?

Earl Gervais - Continue brainstorming names for this section of the park. Keep in contact with content creators such as Mark Goethel.

Summary:

The Subcommittee hopes this report is a helpful tool for both the Parks and Rec commission as well as the Garfield Township Board of Commissioners. It is the goal of all parties to establish a well-communicated plan that everyone can feel comfortable with. We hope this report lays the groundwork for this plan and we can begin executing yet this spring.

Continued Subcommittee meetings will be needed to assist Rock Solid and the Township in finalizing the details of the Phase II plan and the necessary fundraising campaigns. This group would like to thank Garfield Township for the time they have given this important topic. We are grateful to be part of the conversations with the Parks and Recreation Commission and hope we can continue being helpful on this matter in the future.

		Charter Township of Garfield	
		Planning Department Report No. 2023-35	
Prepared:	March 29, 2023	Pages:	1
Meeting:	April 3, 2023 – Parks and Recreation Commission	Attachments:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Subject:	Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area Design Plan – Grants Update and Next Steps		

BACKGROUND:

The Garfield Township 2023-2027 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which includes the Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area Design Plan, was adopted by the Township Board on January 10, 2023 and approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) in February 2023. The Plan allows the Township to maintain eligibility for MDNR grant programs including the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF).

MNRTF GRANT APPLICATION:

The Township Board held a public meeting at their regular meeting on March 14, 2023 to receive public input about the MNRTF grant application. The Township Board also adopted a resolution supporting the grant application. The application is being submitted to MDNR by the April 1, 2023 due date. Staff offers the following comments:

- The application is for a portion of the “Conservation Recreation” Trail, in the northern portion of the Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area property. This trail will be designed as a universally accessible (UA) trail and form an approximately 1.25-mile loop.
- The trail will be primarily crushed gravel and will include some sections of boardwalk to cross wetlands and a foot bridge to cross a stream. The trail will be 10 feet wide to accommodate both hiking and biking.
- Disability Network Northern Michigan performed an accessibility review of the grant application to account for how the project will impact people with disabilities.
- The application received 25 letters of support from individuals and community organizations.

NEXT STEPS:

Staff offers the following comments on next steps following submittal of the MNRTF grant application:

- *Wetland Delineation* – Some sections of the trail will cross wetlands and streams. A staff member from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) suggested having a pre-application meeting with EGLE district staff to walk the site to determine potential wetland and stream impacts. EGLE staff may also be able to provide suggestions for the artesian wells. A wetland delineation of the site would be helpful in anticipating any impacts and for future EGLE permitting of wetland and stream crossings.
- *Boundary Survey* – A boundary survey would be useful for this and other future projects to identify where work can be performed and to ensure that the neighboring property owners’ sites are respected.
- *Site Prep Work* – Other site prep work may include clearing of brush and downed trees, as needed.

The 2023 Parks budget approved by the Township Board includes \$100,000 intended for implementation of the Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area Design Plan, and some of these funds could be used for professional services for a wetland delineation and/or boundary survey. Site prep work is anticipated to be completed by Park Stewards.

ACTION REQUESTED:

After Commissioner discussion, the following motion is offered to recommend to the Township Board regarding the next steps for implementing the Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area Design Plan:

MOTION TO RECOMMEND that the Township Board seek a wetland delineation and boundary survey of the Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area and consider seeking bids for professional services to conduct these tasks.

 Charter Township of Garfield Planning Department Report No. 2023-36		
Prepared:	March 29, 2023	Pages: 2
Meeting:	April 3, 2023 – Parks and Recreation Commission	Attachments: <input type="checkbox"/>
Subject:	Mountain Bike Subcommittee Update	

OVERVIEW:

The mountain bike subcommittee met twice within the past month: on Wednesday March 15 at Township Hall and on Wednesday March 22 at the Commons Natural Area for a walkthrough of the mountain bike trail area. At their meeting on March 15, the subcommittee scheduled the walkthrough for March 22 and discussed different fundraising strategies. Tim Reicha of the Northern Michigan Mountain Bike Association (NMMBA) indicated that NMMBA is currently doing several fundraising campaigns in the region and could act as the fiduciary for this effort.

On March 22, Andrew Farron led the subcommittee and Township Staff on a walkthrough of the mountain bike area. The walkthrough highlighted the current state of these trails as well as issues such as unsafe crossings, rebuilding of unsafe features, and unclear signage. The walkthrough was focused on the area shown on the map below. Members of the subcommittee also provided their own report following the walkthrough, which is provided to the Parks and Recreation Commission as correspondence.



STAFF COMMENT:

The report provided by some members of the subcommittee includes some suggestions on making the existing trails in this area safer and more useable. These include the following:

- ***Rerouting of trails which cross the designated shared trail*** – The shared “two-track” trail is the main hiking route in this portion of the park, and where the Township has received several complaints regarding conflict between hikers and bikers. The report suggests rerouting the “Double Bogey” and “Onion” trails so they no longer cross the main two-track trail and thus remove these conflict points.
- ***Removal of unsafe trails*** – The report suggests removing two of the mountain bike trails, “Goldilocks” and “Foxcraft” due to issues such as crossing other trails, high risk of collisions, erosion, and safety. Removing these trails would improve the safety and functionality of the mountain bike area.
- ***Improving “Up-Trail”*** – To reach the highest point of the mountain bike area, bikers will often walk their bike up the “Hike-a-Bike” route. The report suggests improving the area near the existing trailhead to help prevent conflicts with bikers coming downhill towards the trailhead.
- ***Signage*** – The report suggests installing signage throughout the mountain bike area to signal trail crossings and to identify which trails are open or closed.

These suggestions would help to alleviate many of the immediate concerns with safety and conflicts between hikers and bikers, while allowing for use of the mountain bike area before professionally designed trails are built as part of the implementation of the Commons Natural Area Design Plan. Some existing trails could be incorporated into the design of the future trail system if they are safe and sustainable, and it will be easier to identify these trails after the conflicting trails are removed.

The report also suggests having some volunteers “gain training and permission to use a chainsaw on this property to clear dead and downed trees across existing trails as needed.” It is anticipated that only Township Staff will have the authority to use chainsaws or similar equipment on the property, especially due to liability concerns.

To accomplish the near-term goals, the subcommittee will do another walkthrough to identify the specific trails to be altered or closed and any other tasks. After that, the subcommittee anticipates scheduling a work bee event with the mountain bike community to perform these tasks. The next subcommittee meeting is on Wednesday April 19.

Staff recommends that once the subcommittee completes the second walkthrough, that a more refined proposal be prepared for future presentation to the Township Board. This shall include oversight and participation by Township Staff and specific estimates for time, materials, and costs (e.g., length of trail altered or removed, number of signs of each type needed, etc.).

ACTION REQUESTED:

This item is for discussion only. No action is requested.