



MINUTES

Pathways Committee

Thursday, June 6, 2024

10:00 am

5920 Tahoe Dr. SE

Article 1. Call to Order

Secretary Rik Brown called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

Members Present: Scott Rissi (Arrived 10:25am), Jeff Coffey, Rik Brown, Mike Reese, Kris Taylor

Members Absent: John Driscoll (excused), Supervisor Grace Lesperance (excused)

Others Present: Parks and Recreation Director Melanie Manion, Township Engineer Aric Thorne, and Planning Admin Assistant Nick Govan, and those listed on the sign in sheet.

Article 2. Approve Current Agenda

Director Manion introduced Nicholas Govan, a new employee who would be assisting with planning and parks administration. Nicholas described his background and current projects.

Motion was made by Member Reese, supported by Secretary Brown, to approve the current agenda with the amendment to include staff introduction.

Motion carried unanimously.

Article 3. Public Comment (5-minute limit per individual)

Stephanie Wilde (Bridgewater Road), expressed appreciation for the township's paths and shared concerns about safety issues, particularly around Thornapple Elementary School. She highlighted problems with cars speeding on Bridgewater Road and the need for sidewalks and crosswalks. Stephanie also mentioned the lack of a path on Laraway Lake, which creates a disconnect in the pathway system. She provided specific examples of dangerous situations she had witnessed, including a recent gas leak incident at the school that required students to walk along Bridgewater Road without a proper sidewalk.

Member Reese agreed with Stephanie's concerns, particularly Thornapple Elementary and speeding on Thornapple River Drive. He mentioned that the township was looking into plans for Laraway Lake, though it has been a difficult project. Member Reese also shared his personal experiences with the safety issues, having had children attend Thornapple Elementary in the past.

Director Manion seconded that it has been noted at the multiple meetings and is something that the staff is actively working on addressing.

Chair Rissi arrived 10:25am

Chair Rissi mentioned that there were funds previously in the CIP fund for Safe Routes to School but believed at the time the school district lacked the funding to match.

Article 4. Approve the Minutes from the 3/7/24 Meeting

Motion was made by Secretary Brown, supported by member Reese, to approve the minutes from the 3/7/24 Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Article 5. Old Business

1. 2024 Pathway Renovations

Aric, the Township Engineer, provided a detailed update on the progress of current pathway projects. He reported that Spalding Avenue and Burton Street had been paved with both base and wearing courses completed. He mentioned that the next step would be the installation of concrete sidewalks and ADA ramps, which was scheduled to begin the following Monday. Aric noted that approximately 95% of the restoration work was already underway in anticipation of the ramp installations.

2. Cascade Pedestrian Bridge Update

Township Engineer Aric reported that bids had been received, the lowest bid was above staff estimates for the project. Despite the

higher-than-expected cost, Aric expressed confidence that the project

would move forward. He outlined the construction timeline, mentioning a substantial completion date of November 15. The project was expected to have about an eight-week construction schedule, likely starting in August and continuing through the fall. Aric emphasized that the road would never be fully closed during construction; instead, traffic would be shifted to either side as work progressed.

Article 6. New Business

1. Future Expansion of the Pathway System Discussion

Director Manion gave an introduction on where the township is and budget constraints currently. She also made an emphasis that the committee should be looking into the future as well with the millage in 2027. She stated currently engineering projects have drained the current funds which will likely cause projects for 2025 to be paused. She made sure to voice that when planning for future funding, we should still make sure we are maintaining and planning for costs for current resources and not letting them deteriorate.

Member Rissi asked what the reasonable expectations of pathway lifespan and if its 25 years Aric clarified that yes it does and that with new standards we can repair and replace the surface to extend

Member Rissi mentioned that an inventory of the roads and pathways with build dates would be a good idea so that we can know what to ask

for when the millage comes up. Director Manion mentioned that the staff has created an inventory of pathway conditions to keep track of this with a plan for greater than 5 years out. Staff was going to look at if they can use the data to create the inventory with dates in addition to condition.

Chair Rissi mentioned comments they had heard about the Grand River Greenway Trail pathways project specifically the City of Lowell and Lowell Township coming to a tangible agreement to make connections. He said due to this news and the committee's discussion looking into the future that there should be discussions on making connections or looking for that on the Cascade side of the river as well, likely around McGraw and Peace Park.

To help generate ideas and direction Director Manion presented a map of the current trail system and parks along with a map to draw on with priorities and desired paths from members. Member Rissi provided his ideas on the map and highest priorities, noting connections to the south side of the township, connecting to Recreation Park as well as Paul B Henry trail. Member Reese mentioned with connections to the regional system the township could receive federal grants and other funding to finish these projects.

Director Manion read Vice Chair John Driscoll's email about comments on pathway plan.

Member Taylor voiced it was a lot of miles needed.

Director Manion clarified that is ambitious but with the connections it would provide to regional trails would open lots of funding from state, federal and county but the maintenance cost is something that should still be planned for maintaining and going forward.

Member Coffey asked for clarification on funding cost, taxes, millages.

Director Manion informed that millage funds should be for maintenance where build out and construction should be through grants and donations. She also mentioned that going forward, working with Aric and doing a study of what is feasible and what funding would be needed construct and maintain. Member Coffey asked if there were any other ways to make connections by using smaller paths or larger shoulders, to which Engineer Aric responded that it's usually not best practice.

Article 7. Any Other Business

Members discussed the plans for the next meeting with the goal of focusing on a review of the current budget and projected costs of improvements the committee was hoping to complete within the next five years.

Member Rissi mentioned that comments on new master plan and expanding pathways to show the township is planning on the expansions which is need for grant applicants.

Secretary Brown asked what we can do for the issues raised by residents about issues around schools and walking. Member Rissi suggested that the safe routes to schools should be pursued by the residents to push the board by organizing more residents and advocates to push the board.

Member Taylor also voiced that it is a great idea to use the safe routes to school and that a community group should be organized. Director Melanie mentioned that they will bring up this plan with the township supervisor so they can be aware and work with the school board.

Article 8. Adjournment

Motion was made by Secretary Brown supported by Member Taylor, to Adjourn at 11:34. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rik Brown, Secretary