



Call to Order: Supervisor Davis called the May 13, 2025, Joint Meeting of the Springfield Township Board and the Springfield Township Park Commission to order at 5:30 pm at the Springfield Township Civic Center.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:

Board Members Present

Ric Davis	Township Supervisor
Jamie Dubre	Township Treasurer
Sean Miller	Township Clerk
Lori Beatty	Township Trustee
Chris Moore	Township Trustee
Kevin Sclesky	Township Trustee
Bill Whitley	Township Trustee

Park Commissioners Present

Roger Bower	Park Commissioner/Chair
Chris Benedict	Park Commissioner
Dana Fox-Chobot	Park Commissioner
Josh Leo	Park Commissioner
Jason Morga	Park Commissioner
Richard Parke	Park Commissioner
Jean Vallad	Park Commissioner

Others Present

Sarah Richmond	Parks and Recreation Director
Chris Ward	Oakland County Parks Director

Agenda:

1. Discussion of Natural Resource Management

Supervisor Davis led this discussion by introducing Oakland County Parks Director, Chris Ward.



Mr. Ward stated that he and Supervisor Davis have had some discussions in the past few weeks regarding a partnership with Oakland County Parks and the potential for collaboration regarding the Shiawassee Basin Preserve and River Run Preserve. For these partnerships to be successful, Oakland County Parks must be welcomed by the community and there must be an interest on Oakland County's part as well. He stated that Oakland County Parks has a significant Natural Resources Management team, and they think highly of these two properties. He stated that typically OCP will invest in a non-maintained park by entering into an operations and management agreement, where the deed will still be held by the municipality and in some recent cases, the parks become Oakland County Parks with a local community aspect. He understands that this is not the case with Springfield Township's parks, as they are loved by the community and well maintained. He stated that these types of partnerships are a way to take the tax dollars paid to Oakland County Parks and bring them back to the community. There is flexibility on the terms of how an agreement would come together with Springfield Township and OCP and is willing to explore the possibility.

Supervisor Davis stated that he had concerns initially when this was proposed and involved Attorney Greg Need in looking over contracts, even with Mr. Ward's openness to addressing any concerns. He continued by saying that the Township is faced with increases that are affecting the General Fund, and they need to find ways to offset that. Oakland County Parks is willing to do whatever kind of services that are agreed upon, if any, at no cost.

Commissioner Vallad asked Mr. Ward if Director Richmond was involved at any point during these exploratory conversations with Supervisor Davis.

Mr. Ward stated no.

Commissioner Vallad asked if the planning and management of the parks would then be taken away from an elected Commission.

Mr. Ward stated that the agreement would provide the opportunity to collaborate with the Park Commission. He apologized and stated that he had just recently met Director Richmond for the first time and didn't realize that connection hadn't happened already.

Commissioner Vallad asked why this would be done at no cost.

Mr. Ward stated that the opportunity to make it more accessible and known to a larger group of people is a positive thing. He stated that Oakland County already has a park in



Springfield, Springfield Oaks, though it is not a park with the full park experience such as having walking trails. He believes it would be complimentary to Springfield Oaks.

Commissioner Fox-Chobot stated that she was shocked by this and the fact that Director Richmond was not involved. She stated that Parks and Recreation just had a millage renewal and read the verbiage of the approved millage. She wondered what the Park Commission would tell the residents that voted for the millage.

Mr. Ward stated these types of collaborations only make sense when they are welcomed in and trust is the number one thing needed for both parties. He stated that he did not come into this wanting to take something away from the Parks Commission. In the past, Oakland County Parks has worked well with Springfield Township, and if in the future there is another role OCP can take on, they are open to that.

Supervisor Davis stated that there is nothing set in stone. He put this item on the agenda to discuss whether it could be a possibility as there are no decisions made on this yet.

Commissioner Parke stated that the Township's Natural Resources Manager was a tremendous asset to the community. In addition to bringing grants in, he would find specific groups to bring in to conduct restoration work. He stated that the Poweshiek Skipperling is the perfect example of what type of work and management the Natural Resources Manager did for the township. He's wondering if OCP has the same type of capability to focus on Springfield Township whether it be looking for grant opportunities or bringing in various groups to work alongside with. A lot of the other work that the Natural Resources Manager did would include invasive species control, which was not limited to Park property in the township but also included work on private properties and provided opportunities for those residents as well. He wondered if OCP could also do similar work.

Mr. Ward stated this is something that OCP could bring because they work on a county-wide level and are able to staff a natural resources crew that normally a local community couldn't sustain on their own. He stated that this is quite a precious area, and his staff is fully aware of that.

Commissioner Bower noted that it is such a unique location in Michigan and quite possibly the only known location like it in the Midwest.

Mr. Ward stated that OCP has an interest in having a role in being a support to the community, however, he reiterated that it must be welcomed. As far as community



services, OCP has a community natural resources fund that projects are supported through, but most projects are on public land.

Commissioner Bower commented that the Natural Resources Manager coordinated with universities as well to bring in work, especially with working with the Poweshiek Skipperling. Without that kind of support, the revitalization of that butterfly might not have happened. He wondered if the county has anything to replace that.

Mr. Ward stated that he would really like to bring his Natural Resources team back with him to be able to explain what they do and how much passion they have for their job. He stated that this doesn't require an agreement, OCP wants to make sure Springfield Township's void is filled one way or another.

Commissioner Bower stated that without an agreement, neither party has knowledge of where this is going. Before there was a definite understanding of the work that the Natural Resources Manager was doing, the grants that he was bringing in, and how work was going to proceed. He also asked how Director Richmond got eliminated from the discussions between Mr. Ward and Supervisor Davis.

Mr. Ward stated that in his discussions with Supervisor Davis, he was asked to draft a memo outlining how such an agreement would work.

Supervisor Davis answered Commissioner Bower's question by stating that as with any board discussion, he felt it was important to bring this item before board members first to discuss.

Commissioner Parke stated that Director Richmond is a director and leader of the Parks Commission who is deeply involved and educates the Parks Commissioners.

Supervisor Davis stated that this is a discussion point that now everyone is involved in and should be viewed as an opportunity to save the township money.

Commissioner Vallad asked if Township Board members are also just now receiving this information tonight or if this was discussed internally beforehand.

Treasurer Dubre stated that she understands that the Commissioners are upset that there was no involvement with Director Richmond and understands that this is not the Township Board's directive, as this falls under the Parks Commission. She stated that there is a great opportunity here to work with OCP, and they don't know if it will work or not until they investigate it further. She continued by saying that past partnerships with



OCP have resulted in great success and she wants to make sure to explore future opportunities. She stated that residents pay an Oakland County Parks tax as well, and if residents can get more out of their money, this would be great for them.

Commissioner Parke noted that the Natural Resources Manager was under the management of the Supervisor and Township Board and would then fill in the Parks Commission as needed, so no matter how this was addressed, it was going to be a tricky situation. His concern is if OCP will have one person to advocate for the township and sustain the role as the Natural Resources Manager did.

Mr. Ward reiterated that he would love to bring in his natural resources staff and have them be involved with all these questions.

Commissioner Parke stated that if the Park Commission does end up having an agreement with OCP, the Township Board will still have a big role regarding matching grant funds and direction.

Treasurer Dubre stated that the answer to matching grant funds is not right now, as the township is facing 50% increases in contract services and wouldn't be willing to spend money on park projects until the township can recover from the hits they're currently taking.

Commissioner Parke asked if OCP would be willing to encompass private land as well as park land.

Treasurer Dubre stated that it depends on what's being done on private lands, because a lot of that work was also being done by other organizations.

Supervisor Davis apologized to Director Richmond for not involving her and noted that it was evident in his correspondence with Mr. Ward that he is open to customizing an agreement with Springfield township.

Commissioner Parke noted that a lot of park land that was acquired was done so under certain stipulations and county-wide rules wouldn't necessarily fit well with some of the properties.

Treasurer Dubre agreed that an agreement with OCP would need to be customized for Springfield Township.



Supervisor Davis stated that when the three officials discussed this proposal, they felt it was a good opportunity for parks and how the property can be managed going forward. He stated that the township is facing significant cost increases, and they must find ways to offset that.

Clerk Miller stated that this agreement doesn't have to be in perpetuity. He sees this as an opportunity to stretch the parks millage dollars further by saving money elsewhere. He feels this is an opportunity worth exploring and thinks it would be a huge disservice to the residents if they didn't at least try to make this work.

Commissioner Parke added that he thought the world of the Natural Resources Manager, and it is a tough pill for him to swallow coming to terms with the fact that there won't be a replacement for that position. He understands that going forward there may not be as much backing by the Township Board as there was in the past regarding matching funds for grants.

Supervisor Davis stated that as a group, everyone here wants to accomplish the same goals.

Commissioner Bower agreed and stated that the Mill Pond Project is a perfect example of cooperation between the different boards.

Commissioner Parke stated that he would like Mr. Ward to get together with Director Richmond to explore and discuss current and future projects.

Director Richmond stated that she would like to iron out details before bringing this back to the Parks Commission.

Trustee Whitley recognized the teamwork and collaboration that has gone on between Springfield Township and OCP but stated that he was shocked and blindsided in learning this as a means of a handout as questions regarding the natural resources manager position were raised at the last two Township Board meetings, without an answer. He doesn't think it would be a good idea to choose to enter into any other agreements with Oakland County after how the last Sheriff and Assessing contracts were handled. With the recent millage passed for Springfield's Parks and Recreation, he is worried about how the Oakland County Parks millage is impressed upon with the residents. He believes the township would do far better by replacing the natural resources position to manage the gifts that Springfield Township has.



Mr. Ward stated that he reports to a commission made up of appointed and elected officials and doesn't report to the county executive. Their budget does go to the Board of Commissioners, and he knows that the tenor of recent meetings has not been very positive. He stated that OCP does not have any role in that, and they are fully independently funded, but subject to certain oversight by the county government.

Director Richmond asked Mr. Ward if the County Commissioners could potentially enforce various rules on a potential agreement with Springfield Township.

Mr. Ward stated that if OCP and Springfield were to enter into a local agreement, it would have to be approved by the County Commissioners but believes they would probably be hands off after that.

Treasurer Dubre noted that she is under the assumption that this partnership would not be a bill to the township.

Commissioner Fox-Chobot asked about the Natural Resources Manager's salary in the 2025 budget.

Treasurer Dubre stated that the budget is allocated all the time for things overspent or underspent.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Ward for this discussion.

Director Richmond continued the discussion by highlighting the 2025 natural resources activities including partnerships with the Michigan Nature Association, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, Minnesota Zoo, Michigan State University, and John Ball Zoo. Michigan Natural Features Inventory through grant funding has provided prescribed burns throughout the parks and will continue invasive species control along with partnering with Minnesota Zoo and MSU to continue with their Poweshiek Skipperling studies and release. In addition, the ecological studies and burns that were approved by the Township Board in March will continue pending weather conditions, as some areas will have to wait until the fall due to wet spring conditions. In August the Township Board approved contracting services with PEA Group to perform environmental design, engineering, and permitting services for the Long Lake Restoration project, which is being funded in part from the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership and matching grant contribution. Director Richmond is currently working with Treasurer Dubre to make the first draw for that grant. She is also keeping Ducks Unlimited updated on the status of the restoration project since they are funding a part of the construction portion of that



project. She continued by saying that Parks and Recreation staff will continue to treat and address invasives in the parks as time allows.

Commissioner Bower asked if all these projects were added to Director Richmond's plate due to the Natural Resources Manager leaving.

Director Richmond stated that her day-to-day activities have been affected.

2. Discussion of Allocation of Costs

Commissioner Parke led this discussion by stating that in the Parks and Recreation budget there is a place marker for Civic Center cost responsibilities, but the number hasn't been looked at seriously in a long time. Over the years the township has done a great job at acquiring park land and immediately upon acquiring the property turned it over to Parks and Recreation to handle, which meant adjusting budgets and plans for the Parks Department. While Parks and Recreation is not paying rent in this building, they acknowledge that they are not getting a free ride along the way, as it has always been a cooperative back and forth. The space that Parks and Recreation operates in is a small percentage of the building, and he recognizes that there have been changes throughout the years with budgeting and funding and he knows it is time to revisit and discuss civic center rent. He is hopeful that a sub-committee can be set up to discuss numbers, resolve issues, and figure out a reasonable dollar amount and reasonable way to implement that for the 2026 budget, while keeping in mind that the Parks Department builds their budget off prior year funds.

Treasurer Dubre stated that while all those things still apply, this building is very expensive to run and she doesn't feel this can wait until the 2026 budget, as they are funding the Fire Department at over a half million dollars per year. She stated that the Fire Department must be funded before the Parks Department and right now they are at a dangerously low balance in their fund reserves of the General Fund. She continued by saying that this is not just about Parks and Recreation's rents and allocations, some of it comes from daily operations such as running payroll and paychecks, as there are costs per employee and participant for benefits, all which come out of the General Fund, as does Library and Fire. She agrees that a sub-committee can come up with a number to update Park's contribution to rent, building costs, and personnel costs. She believes Commissioner Parke, Director Richmond, Clerk Miller, and Facilities Manager Jerry David should be committee members who can meet and bring their findings back to the Township Board.



Trustee Whitley suggested setting Parks up with a reverse amortization table to keep track of their assets.

Director Richmond stated that Parks has a plan similar to that.

Treasurer Dubre stated that there needs to be records of carry-over funds and she is willing to help if needed.

Commissioner Fox-Chobot asked Treasurer Dubre if the Township's bond rating is going to be affected due to the Fire Fund balance.

Treasurer Dubre stated she doesn't know at this time.

Treasurer Dubre moved to form a committee to determine cost share allocations for Park and Receptions office space to be comprised of Parks Director Sarah Richmond, Parks Commissioner Richard Parke, Facilities Manager Jerry David, and Clerk Sean Miller. Supported by Commissioner Vallad. Vote on the motion. Yes: Beatty, Davis, Dubre, Miller, Moore, Sclesky, Whitley, Benedict, Bower, Fox-Chobot, Leo, Morga, Parke, and Vallad; No: none; Absent: none. Motion carried by a 14 to 0 vote.

Trustee Whitley asked if charging the Park Fund will be retroactive or going forward.

Treasurer Dubre stated it will be going forward.

Commissioner Parke asked if there needs to be review on the phone bill split.

Treasurer Dubre stated yes.

3. Discussion of Assessment of Insurance Coverages of the Township

Director Richmond led this discussion by stating that with the change in health insurance effective June 1st, the opportunity for employees to "buy up" their coverage will start next year upon review. She stated that she has also discussed the increased cost of liability insurance with the Parks Commission and there was discussion about the potential to bid that out. Looking at coverages, they want to ensure that coverage and deductibles are at the correct amount. The Township will be working with Matt McDonald from McDonald Financial Corporation on the bidding process for both liability insurance and workman's comp.



Trustee Whitley asked who reviews whether the township has the appropriate work classifications included in the township's workman's comp policy.

Clerk Miller stated that the township's insurance representative from Brown and Brown.

Treasurer Dubre added that all the categories were re-classified last time the insurance was reviewed.

Trustee Whitley added that he wanted to ensure that all the work area classifications are covered correctly when looking into a new policy.

Treasurer Dubre noted that the key is that the township is reviewing all insurance policies to keep employee benefits similar and lower costs to the township.

4. Discussion of Cemetery Maintenance Agreement

Clerk Miller led this discussion by stating that the Parks and Recreation maintenance crew has been maintaining Davisburg and Andersonville Cemeteries and he also found out that the Facility Manager's crew was also maintaining the same cemeteries, thus doubling the work. Upon this finding, Director Richmond, Facilities Manager Jerry David, and Clerk Miller had a meeting to discuss what work the two crews were doing on both cemetery properties. Based on that discussion, Clerk Miller put together a proposed agreement and summarized that a lot of the Parks and Recreation crews responsibilities will be transferred to facility oversight, with the exception of jobs that the facility crew can't do such as spraying the cemetery drive to treat for invasive species, inspect the cemetery overlook deck, trim trees and grass by the overlook, and maintenance of the RPZ valve, which is required by the county to be tested in conjunction with Shultz Park. He continued by saying that transferring the work to the facilities crew to maintain and take over most of the maintenance will trim some of the costs to the General Fund and free up time for Park staff. He stated that Director Richmond can still invoice the Clerk's Office for the work that her staff has completed and that this agreement can be reviewed annually at the Parks and Township joint meeting to ensure that everything is working the way it should.

Trustee Sclesky asked about Bigelow Cemetery on E Holly Rd.

Clerk Miller stated that the Township has three minor cemeteries, including Bigelow Cemetery, which the facilities crew inspects periodically for downed trees, limbs, and litter. The Township's lawn care service, All N One, maintains the grass at all cemeteries.



Trustee Sclesky noted that the cleanup at Bigelow cemetery has improved during recent years.

Director Richmond asked if there is a way to invoice the Clerk's Office and not have a cost associated with the invoice process.

Treasurer Dubre stated it can be put as a contribution from the Parks Fund to the General Fund, that way it is not transferred, but rather absorbed by Parks.

Commissioner Vallad asked for clarification on the RPZ valve.

Clerk Miller stated that it is the hand pump located next to the flagpole.

Trustee Whitley asked if there is an internal process for department-to-department transfers other than printing a check.

Treasurer Dubre stated that an internal transfer costs the same due to receipting and transfers.

Clerk Miller moved to adopt the cemetery maintenance agreement between the Clerk's Office and the Parks and Recreation Office and authorize the Clerk and Facilities Manager to execute on behalf of the township. Supported by Trustee Sclesky. Vote on the motion. Yes: Beatty, Davis, Dubre, Miller, Moore, Sclesky, and Whitley; No: none; Absent: none. Motion carried by a 7 to 0 vote.

Commissioner Parke moved to adopt the Cemetery Maintenance Agreement between the Clerk's Office and Parks and Recreation Office and authorize Parks Director Richmond to execute on behalf of the Parks Commission. Supported by Commissioner Vallad. Vote on the motion. Yes: Benedict, Bower, Fox-Chobot, Leo, Morga, Parke, and Vallad; No: none; Absent: none. Motion carried by a 7 to 0 vote.

5. Public Comment

A member of the public asked what the dollar amount is associated with invoicing.

Supervisor Davis stated that this is not a question-and-answer period.

Mike Forst commented that he is concerned with natural resources management and partnering with Oakland County Parks. He is concerned that land that isn't on park property will not be addressed and could become a potential hazard.



Adjournment:

Hearing no other business, Supervisor Davis adjourned the Joint Board meeting at 7:09pm.

Richard L. Davis, Supervisor

Sean R. Miller, Clerk