SPECIAL TRAILS AND PARKS COMMITTEE
June 29, 2017
Draft Minutes

Members Present: Banas, Grebner, Naeyaert, Nolan, and Sebolt

Members Absent: Koenig and Maiville

Others Present: Jared Cypher, Tim Morgan, Tanya Moore, Mike Unsworth, Jessy Gregg, Jonathan Schelke, Lauren Ross, Liz Kane and others

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Banas at 6:02 p.m. in Personnel Conference Room “D & E” of the Human Services Building, 5303 S. Cedar Street, Lansing, Michigan.

Approval of the June 12, 2017 Minutes

MOVED BY COMM. SEBOLT, SUPPORTED BY COMM. GREBNER, TO APPROVE THE JUNE 12, 2017 SPECIAL TRAILS AND PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. Absent: Commissioners Koenig and Maiville

Additions to the Agenda

A discussion ensued about topics on the agenda. No additions were made to the agenda.

Limited Public Comment

None.

1. Resolution Adopting the Recommendations of the Special Trails and Parks Committee

Chairperson Banas stated the resolution before the Committee came about to take into account the feedback from community members, Committee members, and staff. She further stated one of the larger changes to the program was the inclusion of a small grant process to better include smaller communities.

Chairperson Banas stated the priority of the trails and parks millage was to connect trails across the County, but they also wanted to make sure all residents were given an opportunity to get on a trail near where they lived. She further stated another change was the multi-year approach to allow viable large projects to be approved and then planned out over future years.

Chairperson Banas stated the changes to the scoring criteria and the revised timeline for the application process were previously discussed by the Committee and included in the resolution.

Commissioner Nolan stated she would like to address each “therefore be it resolved” clause individually.
Jared Cypher, Deputy Controller, provided historical background on the trails and parks millage, and he explained that the goal of the Committee was to evaluate the trails and parks millage process and see if there were improvements that could be made. He stated any recommendations the Committee made would be forwarded to the County Services Committee for further action.

Chairperson Banas addressed the first “therefore be it resolved” clause relating to small grant requests, and explained the intent of the clause.

Commissioner Nolan stated she would like to change the wording of the clause, because she did not believe it was clear. She asked if the intent was the Board of Commissioners would allocate funding for a single project over a multi-year period.

Discussion.

Chairperson Banas stated that one of the Committee’s intents was if there was a large, expensive project, they could break it up over multiple years.

Commissioner Nolan stated she was speaking specifically about the first “therefore be it resolved” clause. She asked if that was the clause’s intent, to allow the Board of Commissioners to allocate funding for a single project over multiple years.

Tim Morgan, Parks Director, stated that could be the intent, if they clarified it could be a multitude of projects or a single large project that were spread out over a few years. He provided an example where the Board of Commissioners gave East Lansing the matching funds to apply for a Michigan Department of Natural Resources grant in 2017, even though East Lansing would not need the actual funds until 2018.

Mr. Morgan stated the clause was intended to allow the program to award funds for future years, as well as spread out larger projects over multiple years.

A discussion ensued about clarifying the language in the resolution.

Commissioner Nolan asked if “70% of projected future revenue” meant 70% of a single project, or the total millage.

Mr. Cypher explained that a funding amount allocated into a future year could not exceed 70% of the total projected millage revenue for that year.

Commissioner Nolan asked if that was because the County wanted to continue to build a fund balance.

Mr. Cypher stated it was because they wanted to give the flexibility to be able to fund a good project for which they had received an application, without taking up all of the funding for one year.
A discussion ensued about clarifying the language in the resolution.

Mr. Cypher stated that of the $3.4 million in annual millage revenue, no more than 70% of that total revenue could be allocated into future years, whether it was amount of one, or multiple projects combined.

Commissioner Nolan suggested clarifying that the clause was referring to 70% of projected future millage revenue.

Commissioner Grebner stated he would like to make it clear that this was a tentative commitment, because the Board of Commissioners was not legally able to bind the funds for future years and a new Board of Commissioners could reverse the action.

Chairperson Banas stated she agreed with Commissioner Grebner’s suggested change.

Commissioner Grebner asked if the clause was referring to complete projects, or if it was referring to projects that would not be funded at all that year.

Mr. Cypher explained one thing this clause would allow the Board of Commissioners to do would be to take a very large project that could take up the total millage revenue allocation for a single year, and break it up into multiple phases.

Commissioner Grebner asked if the Board of Commissioners could tentatively schedule to fund an entire project in a future year.

Mr. Cypher stated the Board of Commissioners could do so, if they wished.

Chairperson Banas stated the clause allowed for much more flexibility than they currently had.

Commissioner Nolan stated she would like to clarify that they could fund the construction of a large project in multi-year phases. She further stated that when she read through the resolution, she did not understand the intent of the clause.

Commissioner Naeyaert clarified that the Committee had proposed amending the clause to say, the Board of Commissioners “may tentatively” provide funding for projects in future years.

Chairperson Banas stated she believed that phrasing signaled the prioritization of the projects.

Commissioner Naeyaert stated she believed the phrasing could also mean that there was a chance the project would not actually end up receiving funding in that future year. She further stated the second part of the clause contradicted the tentativeness of the first part, by committing to the funding.

Tanya Moore, Spicer Group Landscape Architect, stated that the Michigan Department of Transportation had similar language, which they called conditional commitments. She further stated the funding of a project was conditional on them having said funding that year.
Commissioner Naeyaert stated if it was tentative, then they should not commit to funding a project.

Commissioner Grebner suggested they remove the second part of the clause. He further stated that would allow them to leave the projects that they were not able to fund that year, for the next year.

A discussion ensued about amending the language in the resolution.

Mr. Morgan stated he did not want to lose the big picture of being able to provide multi-year funding and constructing projects in phases by removing the second part of the clause. He suggested amending the clause to provide flexibility, and to construct large projects in multi-year phases.

Commissioner Grebner stated he could envision receiving applications for many projects, and it would be known to the Park Commission, Board of Commissioners, staff, and applicants that those projects not funded in one year, would be funded the next.

Chairperson Banas stated the Park Commission would be reviewing all of the applications and making recommendations, so it was likely that direction for future funding would come from their recommendations.

Commissioner Grebner stated that even smaller projects that did not make the cut one year could be put at the top of the list for the next year because everyone was already familiar with the project and deliberations had already been made.

The resolution was amended as follows:

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,** the Board of Commissioners **will may tentatively** allocate funding **for projects** over a multi-year period (an annual amount not to exceed **70%** of projected future **millage** revenue in any given year) to provide flexibility and **to construct large projects in multi-year phases.** when practical and when the amount of funding requested exceeds the amount available through the millage in any given year, and will provide commitments for grant-match deadlines and programming funding in years that match is available.

This was considered a friendly amendment.

Chairperson Banas introduced the next “be it further resolved” clause in the resolution and explained its intent.

Commissioner Nolan stated she would like to clarify that this clause was for the 17 municipalities that contributed less than **5%** of the total millage revenue each year.
Chairperson Banas stated she was concerned with identifying the amount of municipalities, in case they grew and some ended up contributing more than 5% to the total trails and parks millage revenue annually.

Commissioner Naeyaert stated she did not believe many of these townships would grow.

Commissioner Grebner stated he would not suggest identifying the number of municipalities, because there were villages that could grow within the townships. He further stated that Lansing Township was only township that was close to contributing 5% of the total trails and parks millage revenue, and they were currently shrinking.

A discussion ensued about amending the language of the resolution.

Commissioner Sebolt asked if the intent was that the grant itself would be $50,000, and small communities could apply for it, not that each community was eligible for $50,000.

Chairperson Banas stated that it was available to individual small communities that applied.

Commissioner Naeyaert stated all of the small communities could apply.

Commissioner Sebolt asked if it was a combined pot of $50,000.

Chairperson Banas stated it was not a combined pot, but rather each grant could amount up to $50,000.

Commissioner Naeyaert asked if the total amount allocated to all small communities was $50,000 in a year.

Chairperson Banas stated there was not a specific amount that would be dedicated for small grants.

Commissioner Naeyaert clarified that each small community could apply for up to $50,000 for their projects.

Chairperson Banas stated that was correct, as long as the communities had projects that seemed to need that amount of funding.

A discussion ensued about clarifying the language in the resolution.

Commissioner Sebolt asked what the point of this clause was, as nothing was stopping small communities from applying for funding currently.

Commissioner Grebner stated that the clause suggested they would use different criteria for evaluating the small communities’ applications. He further stated he would like to make sure that there was reference to providing technical assistance in the resolution, as it was important for those communities to have help in applying for the funding.
Mr. Morgan stated the Park Commission would evaluate the small grants separately, but they would still use the same application and scoring criteria. He further stated that if an application was submitted as a small project, then it would be evaluated against other small projects, not against the larger projects.

Chairperson Banas stated the only difference in the application would be the checked “small grants” box, which would allow them to be evaluated in that category.

Commissioner Naeyaert stated that some small communities did not have a Parks and Recreation Department, or access to engineers or other resources to help with applications and projects. She further stated that early on, she had voiced her concerns about small communities not wanting to apply for trails and parks millage funding, because it was too big for them to handle.

Commissioner Naeyaert stated they had spoken with the smaller communities about pooling their resources that allowed them to apply for the funding. She further stated that this addition would encourage the smaller communities to apply, as it assured them that not all of the funding was going to the more centralized, urban areas.

Commissioner Nolan asked if Commissioner Sebolt attended the Committee meeting where small communities voiced their concerns.

Commissioner Sebolt stated he had attended that Committee meeting.

Commissioner Nolan stated she believed this change was in direct response to their feedback at that meeting.

Commissioner Sebolt stated he was fine with providing technical assistance to small communities, but he was concerned that small communities requesting small projects would get special consideration, whereas a small project in his neighborhood in the City of Lansing would be lost in the larger community application pool.

Chairperson Banas stated that the point was to be inclusive to communities who had not been able to build a connection to the River Trail or develop larger projects yet.

Commissioner Sebolt stated it would be different if there was a separate pot of money for small communities, but he was concerned about smaller projects from larger communities.

Chairperson Banas stated she appreciated the viewpoint, but this came from trying to create a sense of fairness. She further stated that larger communities were getting almost all of the trails and parks millage money, and the smaller communities together contributed ¼ of the total millage money, without seeing much for it.

Chairperson Banas stated she wanted smaller communities to be able to participate, and sometimes that meant starting with funding their smaller projects.
Commissioner Grebner stated that if a smaller project was being overlooked in a larger community’s application process, then it was that community’s planning staff that probably overlooked it when preparing the applications. He further stated that he did not believe they should have special treatment for those large community’s small projects.

Commissioner Grebner stated this clause was more for the smaller communities that should be able to get their little sliver of millage money.

Chairperson Banas stated that the City of Lansing did apply for a small amount of money on behalf of the Friends of the Lansing River Trail, which was granted and not overlooked.

Commissioner Sebolt stated that project was approved before the new criteria were proposed. He further stated he was not as concerned with the Lansing staff that submitted the applications overlooking the project, as he was concerned that the Park Commission would notice how much money had already gone to Lansing and forego that project.

Commissioner Naeyaert stated she wanted to clarify that this was in reference to the proportion contributed to the County trails and parks millage, not the total County millage.

Mr. Morgan stated that Figure 1 on Page 12 of the application was not completely up to date, as they were still using 2015 amounts.

A discussion ensued about amending the language in the resolution.

Commissioner Sebolt stated that Lansing was very neighborhood-based, to the point where some neighborhood organizations were registered as 501(c) (3)’s. He further stated he was concerned that projects from his neighborhood organizations would get lost in the shuffle with the small grant allotments.

Commissioner Nolan stated that the lion’s share of the trails and parks millage money was going to Lansing, so she suggested that it was internal Lansing politics at play. She further stated this clause was specifically intended to address the concerns of the smaller communities that attended the Committee meeting, and voiced their concerns about not being able to compete with other communities’ projects.

Commissioner Sebolt stated he was sympathetic to the fact that smaller communities did not have the staff or ability to apply at the same level that larger communities did. He further stated that Lansing was not applying for the trails and parks millage funding as block grants; it was applying for specific projects.

Commissioner Sebolt stated Lansing internal politics did not decide how that money was divided up for projects within the City.

Commissioner Nolan stated that this clause had a specific intent, and she did not think it needed to be diluted as was being suggested.
Chairperson Banas stated that every community was asked to prioritize the projects they put forth, so Lansing could work out the prioritization of its projects separately.

A discussion ensued about amending the language in the resolution.

The resolution was amended as follows:

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board of Commissioners will provide for consideration for Ingham County municipalities which contribute less than 5% of total county trails and parks millage revenue of** small grant requests of up to $50,000 from smaller Ingham County communities (small communities are defined as municipalities contributing less than 5% of total county millage revenue annually) **each during each** application round and provide additional needed technical assistance for completing applications.

This was considered a friendly amendment.

Chairperson Banas stated she would like to include the State of Michigan as an eligible entity to apply for the trails and parks millage.

Mr. Morgan provided background on the State of Michigan’s Lake-to-Lake Trail that went through Stockbridge, and connected to other trails across the State.

Mr. Morgan stated the State of Michigan was looking for funding to extend and improve the trail to Jackson, and he believed that the portion that ran through Stockbridge would be a very beneficial project for the County to approve, for a relatively minimal amount of funds.

Commissioner Sebolt asked if Stockbridge could just be the application sponsor, instead of the State of Michigan. He stated it did not matter what entities the community partnered with after they received the funds.

Commissioner Grebner stated there was a concern that some townships did not have the resources or ability to apply for these projects, and they should not ignore part of the County because of that, especially if there was a nonprofit group willing to step in. He further stated it might come down to who ultimately hired the contractor for the project.

Commissioner Sebolt stated he was more concerned about involving the State in the application process, not 501(c) (3)’s.

Chairperson Banas asked if the Lake-to-Lake Trail would be precluded from applying for the trails and parks millage, because of their involvement with the State of Michigan.

Mr. Morgan stated that the State of Michigan might own the trail system, but they were not in charge of operation. He further stated he believed the State of Michigan had MOU’s with every municipality along the trail for that matter.
Commissioner Naeyaert stated she did not want to include the State of Michigan as an eligible applicant.

A discussion ensued about the language surrounding applicants for the program.

Chairperson Banas stated because there was a consensus not to include the State of Michigan as an eligible applicant, they would not do so.

Commissioner Nolan stated that she would like to change the phrasing of the second sentence with suggested edits in the application.

Commissioner Grebner clarified that if a project was being bid in phases, subsequent phases would not be ineligible because a previous phase had already been bid or locally matched.

Chairperson Banas stated that if a project was broken into separate segments, then each segment could be considered for funding individually.

Commissioner Grebner clarified that the subsequent phases would not be taking into account previously approved or bid amounts as matched funding.

Attachment A to the resolution was amended as follows:

The Park Commission will not entertain funding application requests for projects that have already been locally approved and bid will not be eligible for millage funding.

This was considered a friendly amendment.

A discussion ensued about clarifying the language on the application.

Attachment A to the resolution was amended as follows:

☐ Small grant: Up to $50,000 for small communities. Small communities defined as municipalities contributing less than 5% of total county millage revenue annually. See Figure 1.

This was considered a friendly amendment.

A discussion ensued about the other changes made to the application.

Commissioner Grebner stated he would like to address the “be it further resolved” clause relating to the scoring criteria.

Mr. Cypher stated he understood that there was a previous concern with the scoring criteria, specifically with Question 3, relating to other available funders and partners. He further stated the criteria were altered to credit two points for a 1-9% matched funds, but still credit zero points for zero matched funds.
Mr. Morgan stated the Park Commission had deliberated about the criteria, and this was their specific recommendation to the Committee.

Commissioner Grebner stated his intention was to make it clear that the Board of Commissioners was not bound by or even using the scoring system set forth in the resolution. He further stated the criteria should be used as an initial scoring system for the Park Commission and staff to use, but the Board of Commissioners would not have to follow them.

Commissioner Grebner stated the Board of Commissioners might end up following the recommendation set out by the criteria, but they were not bound by it.

Chairperson Banas stated this process had been in place since the beginning of the trails and parks millage, in that the Park Commission made the recommendations, but the Board of Commissioners did not necessarily have to honor them. She further stated she did think it was important for the priorities to be identified in some way, and she was grateful that the Park Commission was doing that work to initially screen the projects.

Commissioner Nolan clarified the amendment was to make the distinction that the scoring criteria were for the Park Commission and staff, not for the Board of Commissioners.

Chairperson Banas stated she agreed with Commissioner Grebner’s suggestion.

Discussion.

The resolution was amended as follows:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Ingham County Board of Commissioners adopts the criteria for use by Park Commission and staff for scoring applications for funding (attachment B).

This was considered a friendly amendment.

A discussion ensued about the language in the resolution.

Commissioner Sebolt asked if the proposed timeline was realistic, given the tight schedule with the Board of Commissioners’ schedule in the coming month. He further asked if six weeks was enough for local communities to put the applications together and submit them by the deadline.

Commissioner Sebolt stated the local communities would have an idea of what the application would look like, but until the Board of Commissioners had deliberated and voted, then they would not know for sure.

Chairperson Banas asked Mr. Morgan what he had heard from communities who might be applying for the trails and parks millage, and if they were concerned about the proposed timeline.

Mr. Morgan stated from the feedback he had received when he sent the proposed timeline around, no one had said the deadline was unreasonable. He further stated that the application was
not changing too much, and the scoring criteria that did change would not affect the submitting of applications.

Mr. Morgan stated a lot of the applications they would receive would be slightly edited applications that were not selected in previous rounds. He further stated new applications could use the previous application to work off of before this one was finalized.

MOVED BY COMM. SEBOLT, SUPPORTED BY COMM. NAEYAERT, TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION AS AMENDED.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. Absent: Commissioners Koenig and Maiville

Commissioner Nolan asked if there would be more meetings for this Committee.

Chairperson Banas stated there would not be any more meetings, as the recommendations would be sent to the County Services Committee for further action.

Commissioner Nolan asked if there would be a separate discussion in the County Services Committee about funding another position in the Parks Department for technical assistance.

Chairperson Banas stated she expected that would be what would happen.

Mr. Morgan updated the Committee about the meeting the Parks Department had with community members about trails that morning. He stated there was a good turnout and good feedback from the meeting, and there would be more meetings to come to follow up on their recommendations.

Chairperson Banas thanked the Committee members for their work on the trails and parks millage.

Announcements

None.

Public Comment

Lauren Ross, Friends of the Lansing Regional Trails Trail Ambassador, introduced herself to the Committee and stated she would be giving updates to the Board of Commissioners throughout the year.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.