Grand River Ravines
Master Plan Meeting Summary

Public Input Meeting held at the
Vander Laan Room, Hager Park - Jenison, Michigan
November 27, 2012, 6:30 pm

Attendees:

Approximately 45 members of the public attended the meeting. Specific individuals recorded were as follows:

Al Bosch, Alex Woolman, Anthony Katte, Chad & Tami Ebel, Chad Gilbert, Crystal Unema, Deskin Miller, Don Williams, Doug & Beth Wagner

Dwayne Johnson, Jacob Moljc, Jeff Cobb, Jeff DeKoning, Jeff Larabel, Jerry Schnejer, Jim & Barb Beck, Judy Bergman, Lindy Velderman

Mary Jane Byker, Maureen McElroy, Nick & Kelsey Karsten, Rodger DeVries, Russ & Kay Baker, Sharon VanDam, Sharon Woolman, Tim Hillson, Willa Bauer

Park Staff and Public Officials:

John Scholtz, Curt TerHaar, Kyle Roffey, Ray Statema

Ottawa County Parks Director, Ottawa County Coord. of Park Planning & Dev., Ottawa County Parks Administrative Secretary, Ottawa County Parks Board of Commissioners

Meeting Summary:

John Scholtz opened the meeting with introductions and proceeded to provide a brief overview of the county parks system and the greenway initiatives

- The parks mission statement, size of the system, and the concept of greenways was presented with the current emphasis in Ottawa County on the Grand River corridor.

- The importance of natural, cultural and historical resources within the Grand River Ravines property was discussed along with rediscovery of the river as a recreational resource.
Curt TerHaar then presented additional information about the master plan:

- The master plan project-planning schedule which will include two additional public hearings at the next two Parks Commission meetings, a master plan adoption date goal of February 2013 and submitting a grant proposal in April, 2013, with potential construction beginning in Summer/Fall 2014.

- Initial goals for the project include providing recreation opportunities and access to the unique features of the site, facilitating development of the Greenway Trail, utilizing existing improvements, reducing erosion and maintain stability, improving habitat, and to complement and coordinate with adjacent landowner, Grand Valley University.

- Potential activities and facilities were discussed including trails with maps, picnicking, nature and historic interpretation, fishing access, canoe/kayak access, day-use buildings, barn restoration, additional parking, and restrooms, along with canoe/kayak rental, zip line, Dog Park, and tree house.

- An initial concept plan was presented showing layout of proposed uses

Comments/Discussion:

- Questions were asked about the proposed parking areas at the park. Comments were made concerning the lack of parking spaces at the south and north ravine sites. Response: TerHaar stated the parking at the south ravines would greatly increase with potentially two parking areas and several smaller parking areas are proposed throughout the north ravines.

- Comments were made concerning the connecting of the south and north ravines and whether bridges could connect the trails. Response: TerHaar stated he has proposed trail and bridge connections. An easement over adjacent private land could provide an additional trail route.

- Suggestion was made to plow the current driveway to the house at the north ravines to allow easier walking to the riverfront during the winter.

- Suggestion was made to have benches placed on the house deck and by the river for walkers to enjoy the view now and not wait on the proposed improvement construction.

- Question was asked if volunteers could help build benches to allow for immediate use. Response: TerHaar stated that anyone who wanted to volunteer could contact Melanie Manion at the Parks Office, the Parks Volunteer Coordinator.

- Suggestion to in the short-term to have Port-a-Jon’s installed down by the river.

- Comments were made to allow dogs’ off-leash at the south ravines site on the trails as it is used now. Response: The current use would be difficult once the site is developed and
attracts other types of park users. A proposed large area dog park would provide some of the benefits to current users. Long-term the Bend Area Open space just a few miles to the east could provide for off-leash use once trails are developed.

- Question was asked if there would be a time-gap between discontinuing dogs off-leash at the Grand River Ravines site and having trails available at the Bend Area. Response: Parks would work hard to avoid a time-gap.

- Comments were made thanking the parks staff for taking out the barbed wire fence, putting down crushed stone on some paths, mowing paths, and having dog waste stations.

- Suggestion was made to use the barn as a warming station in the winter.

- Suggestion was made to have picnicking overlooking the river.

- Question was asked if the driveway to the house would be open. Response: Due to the width of the single drive, the driveway will remain closed to vehicles.

- Suggestion was made to allow cross-country skiing.

- Suggestion to allow snowmobiling on the trails.

- Question was asked if dogsledding would be allowed on the trails. Response: This has not been an issue that has been brought up before. Parks staff will consider it.

- Suggestion was made to allow weddings down by the river.

- Question was asked if the site would have a gate, due to current night use at the site. Response: A gate would be at the entrance near 42nd Ave. when the project is complete and would be locked at night.

- Question was asked if bikes would be allowed on the paved paths. Response: Yes.

- Question was asked if archery hunting would be allowed. Response: The possibility of permit hunting is an option for the parks commission to consider.

- Scholtz reported on a call he received before the meeting from Bob Semeyn who stated he strongly believes archery deer hunting should be allowed at Grand River Ravines to help control deer numbers. Semeyn reported he has seen an increase in the numbers of deer killed on Fillmore Street since hunting has been discontinued. Scholtz commented that hunting, if allowed, would have to be by permit since the property is now designated as park land.

- A comment was made concerning the removal of the cross by the river. Response: The decision was made to remove all personal artifacts that did not have historical significance and the religious symbol was not appropriate on the site. A comment was made that the area looks better without the cross.
- A comment was made that the covered bridge down by the river has some boards that need to be replace. Response: TerHaar stated that the plan calls to keep the bridge, so short term repairs will be evaluated.

- Suggestion was made to allow for additional temporary parking at the south ravines due to high use and safety concerns of parking along the road.

- Suggestion was made to have the dog park on the east side of the barn and using some areas for rental for dog competitions and dog training sessions; and move the proposed parking lot to the west side of the barn.

- Suggestion was made not to use chain-link fence around the dog park. Response: A farm fence is the style the parks staff is looking at to keep with the theme of the barn area.

Comments from this meeting will be incorporated into a preliminary concept plan for the park commission to be presented on December 5 at 5:00 pm, Fillmore Complex, Room E. Additional information will be posted on the web site. Meeting participants were encouraged to contact John Scholtz or Curt TerHaar with additional comments or questions.

The meeting ended at approximately 7:45 pm.

End of Meeting Notes