

Weekly News Report

Oakland Township Sentinel, LLC

News and Information - Charter Township of Oakland, Michigan

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<http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.wordpress.com/>

“Informed citizens are the foundation of effective self-government”

Township Meetings Next Week

(The public is invited to attend and to comment. Also you can view most meetings live on Ch 17, or see a video on the Township website after the meeting)

Tuesday Feb 11, Board of Trustees (BOT), Township Hall, 7-10 P.M.

Wednesday, Feb 12, Joint Meeting of Board of Trustees, Township and Parks and Recreation Commission (to discuss budget issues, Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC), Township Hall, 6-8 P.M.)

Future Township Meetings

Wednesday, Feb 19, Historic District Commission (HDC) Township Hall, 7-9 P.M.

Tuesday, Feb 25, Board of Trustees (BOT), Township Hall, 7-10 P.M.

Tuesday, March 4, Planning Commission (PC), Township Hall, 7-9 P.M.

Tuesday, March 11, Board of Trustees (BOT), Township Hall, 7-10 P.M.

Wednesday, March 12th, Dog Park Task Force Open House, 5-7 P.M., Township Hall,

Tuesday, March 25, Board of Trustees (BOT), Township Hall, 7-10 P.M.

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Corrections:

On our website, "Planning Commission" page we had incorrectly identified one of the replaced Planning Commission members. It now reads as follows:

"2012-2013 - The Planning Commission membership has changed in the last year with the replacement of Marc Edwards with Jeanne Langlois at Board of Trustees representative and Ron Hein and John Giannangeli replacing James Foulkrod and ~~Carolyn Phelps~~ Amy Carels."

Information added to our website this past week –

Link: <http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.wordpress.com/>

Safety Paths and Trails page: (excel workbook analysis of certain expenses)

Professional Consultant Expenditures since inception to 1/24/2014 have been \$233,946.60

according to a listing of all invoices at this link: [FOIA-OTS-2014-](#)

[6 Reply Trails Millage Expenses](#). See details in this excel workbook made from listing of all invoices up to 1-24-2014 from the above FOIA. [FOIA-OTS-2014-6 Summary Table – Trails Millage Professional Consultants](#)

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Request Page:

Parks LLNP Caretaker Contract issue - Supervisor Gonser statement read 1-14-14 NOT AVAILABLE; copy of letter by Attorney to Parks Commission - DENIED

<http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/foia-ots-2014-2-reply-denied-llnp-caretaker-contract-gonser-kelly.pdf>

\Money - Taxes - Budgets - Audits - Revenues – Expenses page

Plante Moran was selected to be our new audit firm. The audit takes place starting in March and culminates with an audit report presented in a public meeting in August. The fee is estimated to be \$28,000 for about 245 hours of work. See page 17 at the link below to their proposal for a timeline of key audit steps. See page 21 for the fee estimate. [Plante Moran Audit Proposal 12-6-2014](#)

Sheriff's Department 2013 Statistics:

<http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.wordpress.com/police-sheriffs-department/>

Board of Trustees (BOT)

Link to Township website page:

http://www.oaklandtownship.org/boards_and_commissions/board_of_trustees/index.php

Link to Oakland Township Sentinel webpage:

<http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.wordpress.com/board-of-trustees/>

Next meeting:

Wednesday, Feb 12th, Joint Meeting of Board of Trustees, Township and Parks and Recreation Commission to discuss budget issues, Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC), Township Hall, 6-8 P.M.

Historic District Commission (HDC)

Link to Township website page:

http://www.oaklandtownship.org/boards_and_commissions/historic_district_commission/index.php

Link to Oakland Township Sentinel webpage:

<http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.wordpress.com/oakland-township-historical-society-and-oakland-township-historic-district-commission/>

Next meeting –

Wednesday, Feb 19th, Historic District Commission (HDC) Township Hall, 7-9 P.M.

Older Persons' Commission

Website homepage: <http://www.opcseniorcenter.org/>

Link to Sentinel webpage: <http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.wordpress.com/older-persons-commission/>

Link to OPC February Newsletter: <http://www.opcseniorcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/OPC-FEB-2014-NewsWeb.pdf>

Feb. 24th, Representative Tom McMillan will host a “Property Tax Town Hall Meeting” at 7 P.M.

Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC)

Link to Township webpage:

http://www.oaklandtownship.org/boards_and_commissions/parks_and_recreation/index.php

Link to Oakland Township Sentinel webpage:

<http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.wordpress.com/parks-and-recreation-commission/>

Wednesday, March 12th, Dog Park Task Force Open House, 5-7 P.M., Township Hall,

Summary Chart - Parks and Recreation Meeting 2-5-2014

Agenda Item (Green = pass, Red = Fail, Black = discussion only, no vote)	Colleen Barkham	Joe Peruzzi	David Mackley	Andy Zale - Chairman	Alice Tomboulis	Roger Schmidt	Ann Marie Rogers
1 - Agenda approvals - some changes	*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 - Approve minutes 1/8/14 meeting	*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3 - Approve minutes 1/22/14 meeting	*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4 - General Public Comment	*	na	na	na	na	na	na
5 - Review Marshview Park Western Parking Lot Design #5B	*	na	na	na	na	na	na
6 - Approved by-law change	*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
7 - Approved additional WHIP payment of	*	*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8- Approved 2013-2014 Parks Budget (Fund 208)	*	*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9 - Approved 2013-2014 Land Preservation Budget (Fund 408)	*	*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
10 - Approved 2013-2014 Parks Budget (Fund 208)	*	*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11 - Approved 2014-2015 Land Preservation (Fund 408)	*	*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
12 - Replaced Jan. 12th regular meeting with joing budget meeting with Board of Trustees	*	*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
13 - Park Director's Report	*						
14 - Commissioners' Reports	*						
15 - Approve Invoices for payment	*		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
* Commissioner Colleen Barkham was absent							

Details Parks and Recreation Meeting

#2, #3 Minutes Approvals

There was discussion on the whether or not minutes accurately portrayed citizen comments in several instances

#4 – Citizen Comments

One brief citizen comment.

#5 Marshview Park Western Parking Lot Addition

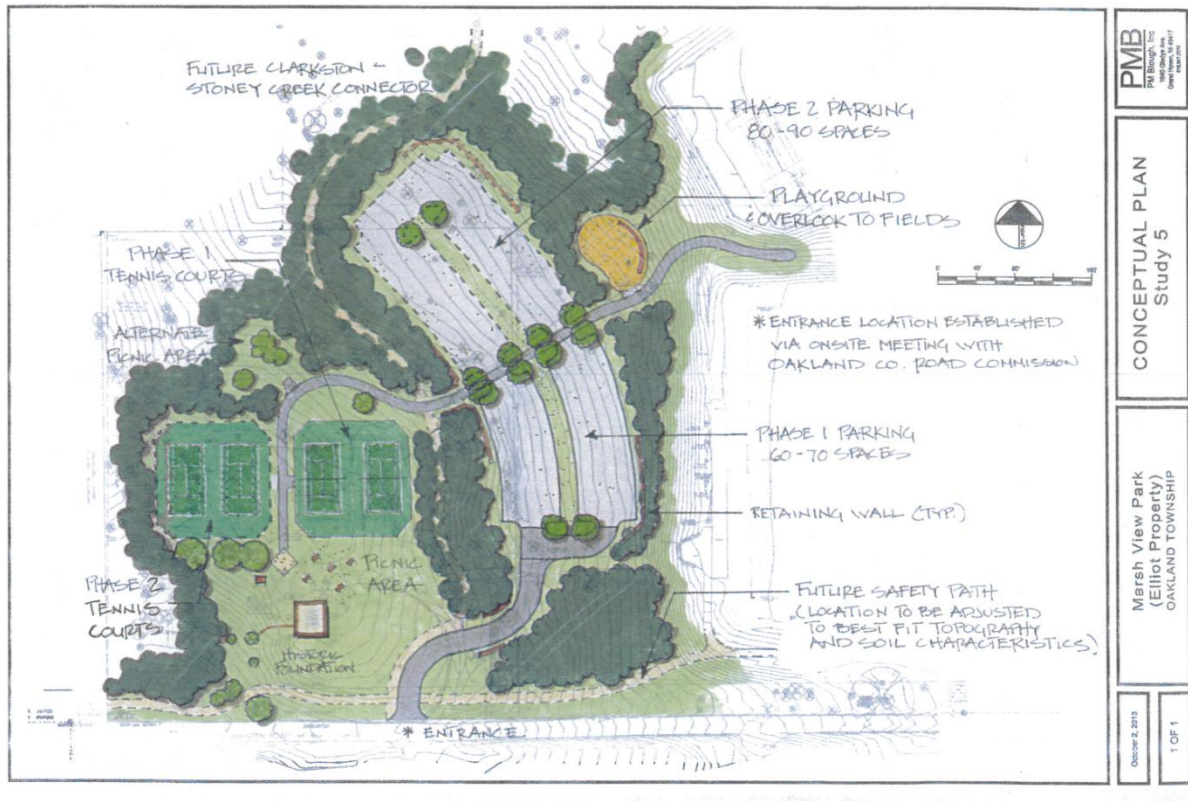
Background: It had previously been determined the approximately 75 parking spaces at this park are not sufficient for the uses (soccer, archery, basketball). As a result the lot becomes full and cars stop or park on Clarkston Rd. creating a danger to pedestrians going to and from these cars. To add parking the Commission bought the adjacent “Elliott Property”. This added a further complication as the Historic Society desired to preserve all or part of the farmhouse on this property. Initial plans by Landscape Architect Pam Blough of P.M. Blough, Inc. were for a second entrance onto Clarkston Rd. With various comments from commissioners and the public version 5 was the most recent plan. Residents and others objected to this entrance as unsafe as it enter Clarkston Rd. (a gravel road) at a particularly narrow point with visibility obstructed by a hill. At a resident’s suggestion the Commission studied an alternative that uses only the current entrance. The Spring Newsletter contained an announcement about this on page 2 and continued on page 15:

http://www.oaklandtownship.org/boards_and_commissions/parks_and_recreation/docs/PRCNewsletterWinterSpring14.pdf

Plan #5B was reviewed for about 1 hour including resident comments.

.....

Property	Study 5	Study 5B
Cost	\$687,340	\$868,908
Entrances to Clarkston	2	1
Screening from Road	Excellent	Could be lost if RCOC cuts trees to widen Clarkston



Marshview Park – Western Parking Lot Addition – Study #5

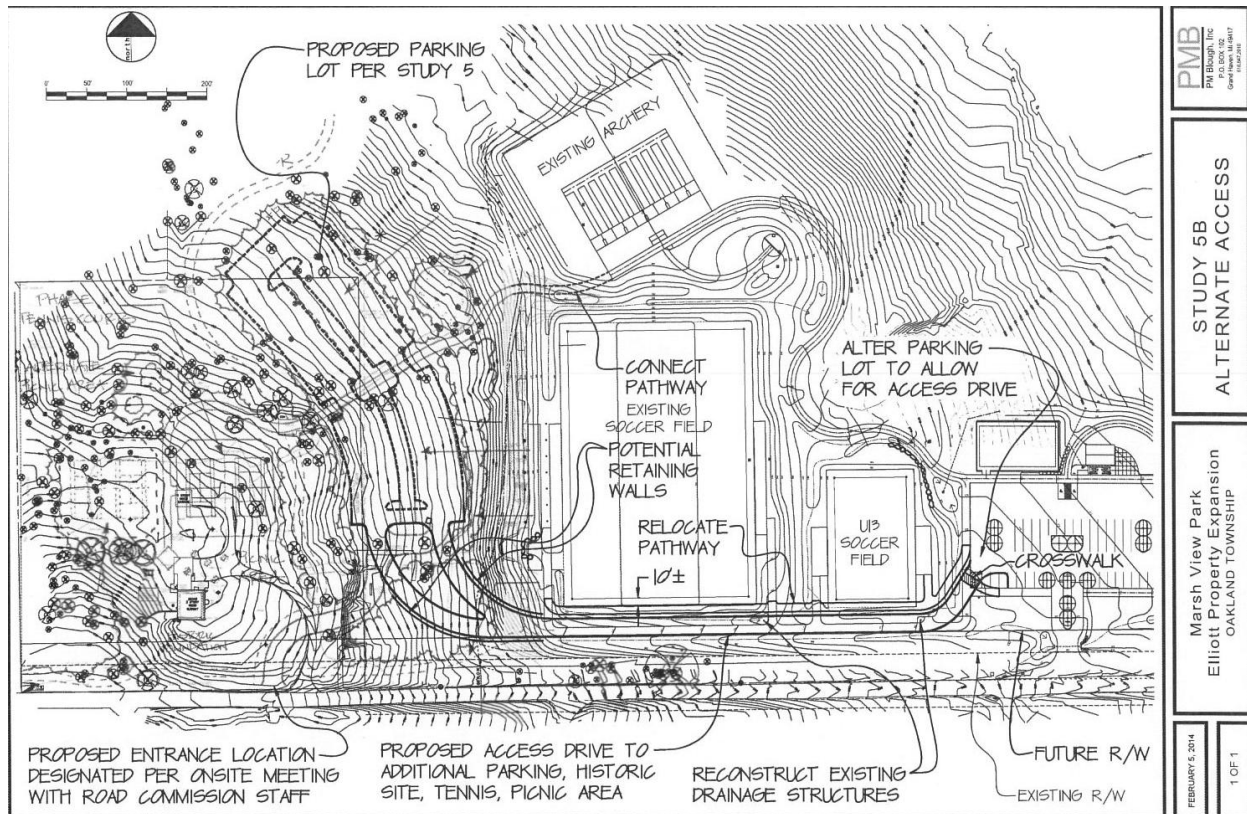
Two Entrances to Clarkston Rd. (Existing park and lot not shown)

“Conceptual opinion of probable costs”:

Phase 1 – 65 parking spaces	\$231,352
Phase 2 – 85 parking spaces	\$164,263
Additional Park Items (detail below).....	\$291,725
Total.....	\$687,340

Additional Park Items

Phase 1 Tennis Courts (2) No Lighting	1 Lump Sum	\$	70,000.00	\$	70,000.00
Playground and Overlook	1 Lump Sum	\$	45,000.00	\$	45,000.00
Picnic Tables	5 Each	\$	1,200.00	\$	6,000.00
Phase 2 Tennis Courts (2) No lighting	1 Lump Sum	\$	70,000.00	\$	70,000.00
Future Safety Path Extension	640 Lineal Feet	\$	22.50	\$	14,400.00
Future Clarkston/Stoney Crk Connector	2658 Lineal Feet	\$	22.50	\$	59,805.00
Subtotal				\$	265,205.00
10% Contingency				\$	26,520.50
Total Additional Items Conceptual Opinion of Probable Costs				\$	291,725.50



Marshview Park – Western Parking Lot Addition – Elliott Property – Study #5B – Only One Entrance to Clarkston Rd. (Shows some of existing park to the east).

“Conceptual opinion of probable costs”:

Phase 1 – 65 parking spaces \$412,920

Phase 2 – 85 parking spaces \$164,263

Additional Park Items (detail below).....\$291,725

Total.....\$868,908

Additional Park Items

Phase 1 Tennis Courts (2) No Lighting	1 Lump Sum	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 70,000.00
Playground and Overlook	1 Lump Sum	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 45,000.00
Picnic Tables	5 Each	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 6,000.00
Phase 2 Tennis Courts (2) No lighting	1 Lump Sum	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 70,000.00
Future Safety Path Extension	640 Lineal Feet	\$ 22.50	\$ 14,400.00
Future Clarkston/Stoney Crk Connector	2658 Lineal Feet	\$ 22.50	\$ 59,805.00
Subtotal			\$ 265,205.00

10% Contingency \$ 26,520.50

Total Additional Items Conceptual Opinion of Probable Costs \$ 291,725.50

Summary of citizens comments about Marshview Park parking:

- We would like to see an entrance from Stony Creek Rd. studied as a possibly better alternative. We don't see where it has been seriously studied, certainly not at the level of the Clarkston Rd. alternatives.
- Stony Creek Rd. is a wide, paved road. Clarkston is a narrow poorly maintained gravel road on which in some narrow areas two cars can pass only with difficulty.
- As Clarkston Rd. residents, we would like to be informed of all meetings concerning this project. As a resident I have never been notified of any meetings.
- We would like to see a traffic study of Clarkston Rd. and accidents at Clarkston and Orion Rd.
- I have not seen a study, report, etc. which shows how many parking spaces we need. I have found architectural manuals that address this question.
- The resident comments seem to be changing the goal posts for this project, first not enough parking, now too much.

(Editor's note: Parks and Recreation Commission by-laws, seen at this link, are silent on how citizen comments are to be handled:

<http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/bylawsprc121212.pdf>

#7 WHIP

The WHIP project cost and grant were increased \$3,843 to allow better clean-up of brush that is close to neighbor's lot lines. (The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program for conservation-minded landowners who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat on agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, and Indian land. From this web link:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/whip/>)

#8, #9, #10, #11, #12 – Budgets Approved, Joint Budget Meeting with Board

The fiscal year is April 1st to March 31st. If changes of \$10,000 per cost center are expected, the budget must be amended; thus the approvals of 2013-2014. The 2014-2015 budget is due on March. Since the Parks two budgets (Fund 208 – Parks and Fund 408 – Land Preservation) must be approved by the Board of Trustees by statute, a joint meeting is planned for Jan. 12th at 6-8 P.M. to review these budgets.

Planning Commission (PC)

Link to Township webpage:

http://www.oaklandtownship.org/boards_and_commissions/planning_commission/index.php

Link to Oakland Township Sentinel web page:

<http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.wordpress.com/planning-commission/>

Next meeting March 4th, 7P.M., Township Hall

(Probably work on revision of the Goodison Plan.)

Police / Sheriff's Department

Link to Township webpage:

http://www.oaklandtownship.org/township_departments/sheriffs_department/index.php

Link to Oakland Township Sentinel webpage:

<http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.wordpress.com/police-sheriffs-department/>

Sheriff's Department 2013 Statistics:

<http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.wordpress.com/police-sheriffs-department/>

Trails and Safety Paths Advisory Committee (TSPAC)

Link to Township webpage:

http://www.oaklandtownship.org/township_departments/safety_path_and_trail_network/index.php

Link to Oakland Township Sentinel webpage:

<http://oaklandtownshipsentinel.wordpress.com/safety-paths-and-trails-committee-information/>

- **Four Routes under study**
- **Four citizens likely to be appointed to this committee**

Tuesday Feb. 4th, Safety Paths and Trails – Paint Creek Cider Mill, 7 -10P.M.

A summary of comments on seven agenda items follows:

1 – Minutes of Dec meeting – approved

2 – Public Comment

Cam Mannino commented for a friend that an alternative to the Adams Rd. safety path that was rejected last year would be welcome. The committee and four residents present discussed the possibilities and the committee agreed that this was one of their priorities.

Libby Dwyer expressed interest in enhancing equestrian trails in the township, with several ideas and possibilities. She also recommended that new citizen appointments span diverse user interest groups.

Tom Asmus commented on trails within Bald Mountain north.

Bob Yager suggested that the current safest route to the Paint Creek Trail from the corner of Adams and Gunn is to go east on the south side of Gunn to the stairs or small path leading to the

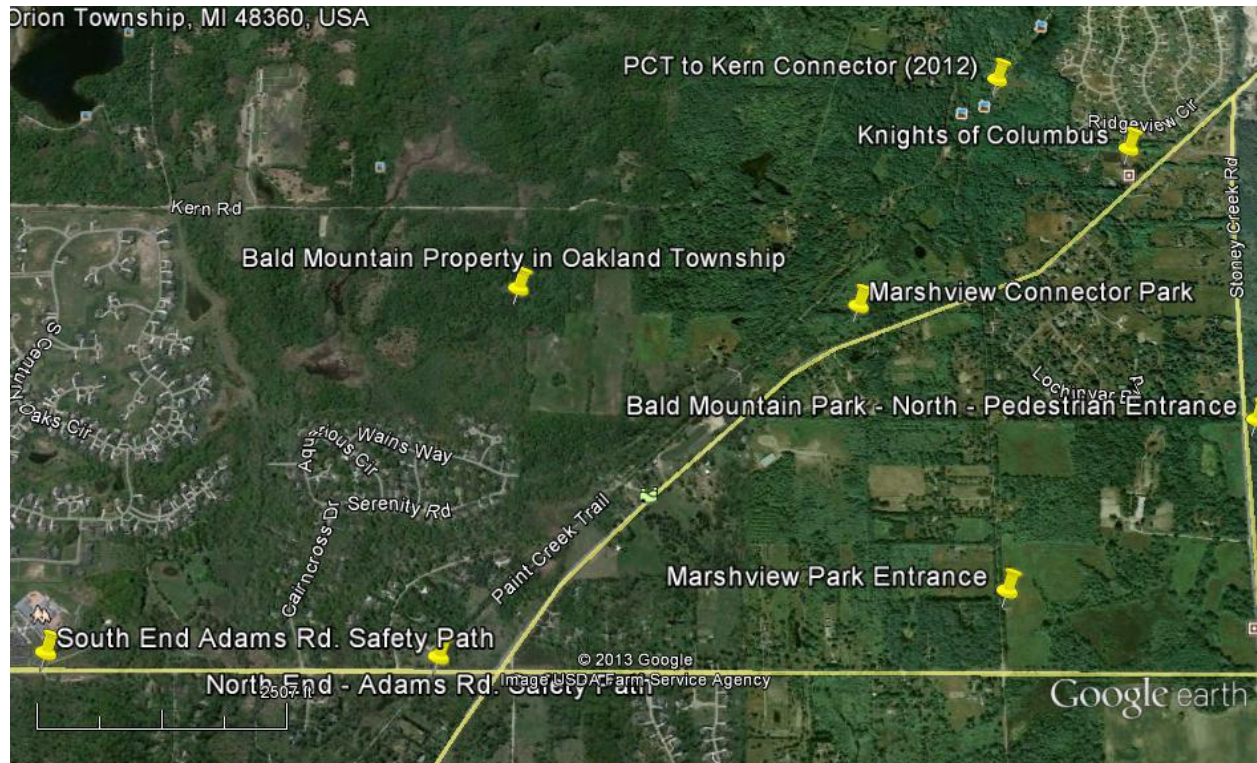
trail (look for the green sign). Adults and families use this route, but it is not suitable for young children traveling alone.

3 – Information on potential Safety Paths: Reports, discussion
See Google Earth pictures on following pages

4. Committee size, composition, role: Discussion / recommendation:

The committee assigned Jeanne Langlois to draft a letter to the Board of Trustees requesting appointment of 4 additional citizen committee members to be recommended by the existing 3 members and approving a statement of purpose of this committee.

Next meeting set for Wed. March 5th, 3 P.M., Paint Creek Cider Mill



Southwest Oakland Township to Paint Creek Trail

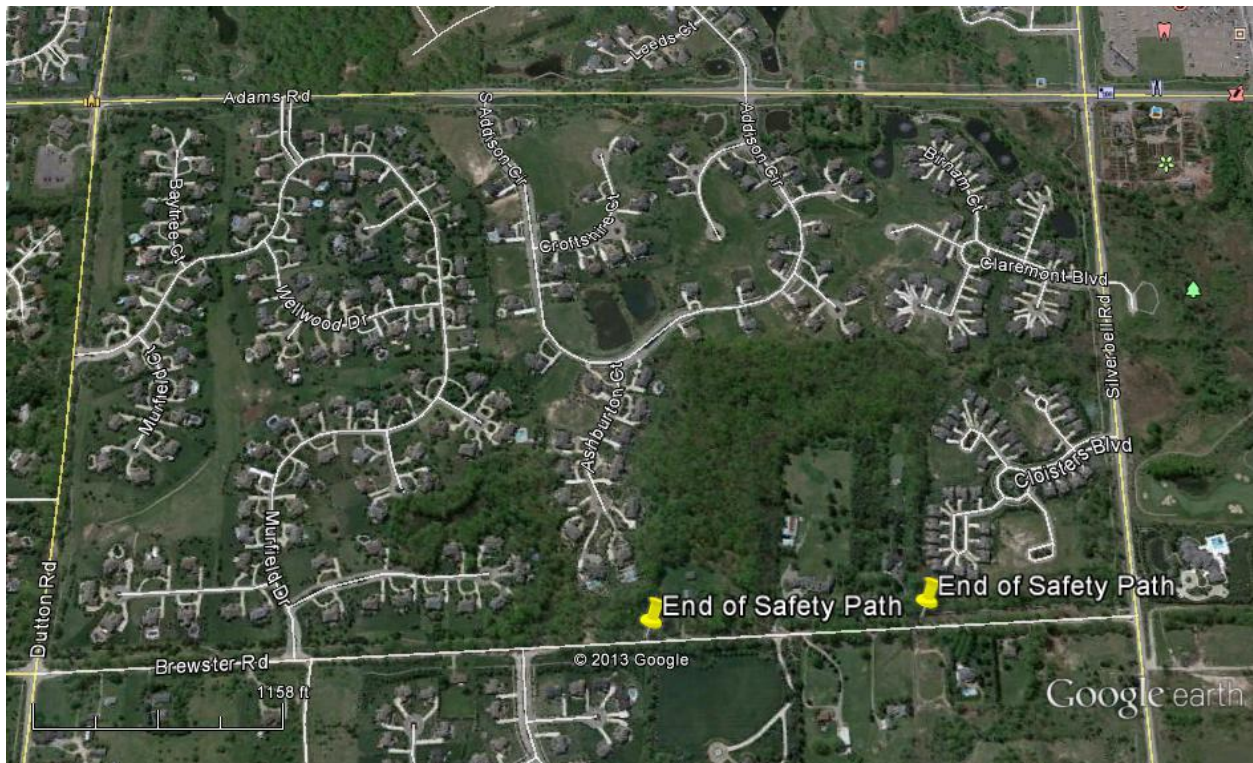
(North is to the right, West is “up”)

The previously rejected Adams Rd. Safety path is delineated by two yellow pins at bottom left.

The alternative under study would go through the “Bald Mountain Property in Oakland Township”. The yellow pin is in approximately the center of this property. The exact proposed route and feasibility (swamps?) is to be determined by \$5,000 study by OHM Engineering. The route would be from the end of a safety path on east side of Kern through the Bald Mountain property, then a bridge across Paint Creek (where is TBD) and to Paint Creek Trail.

Marshview Park to Paint Creek Trail

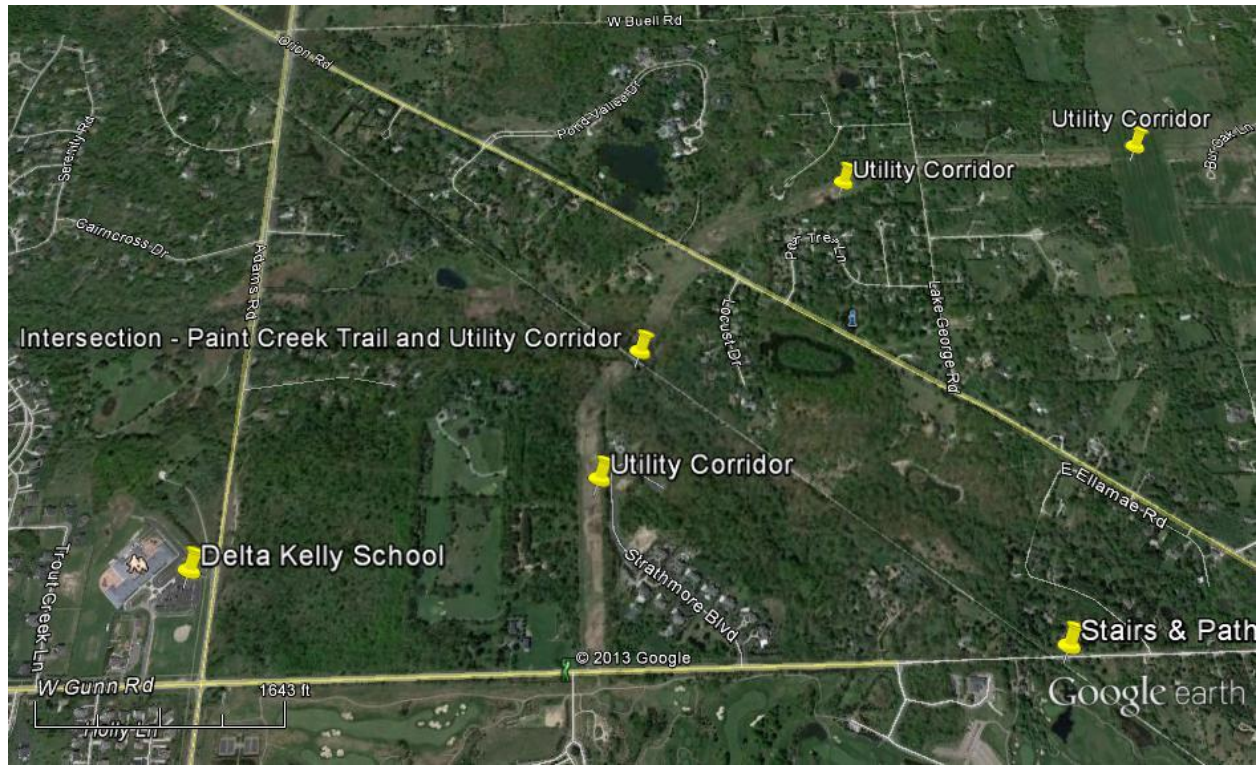
Shown here are two possible routes to connect Marshview Park to Paint Creek Trail. The “Old route” was from entrance on Clarkston (see yellow pin), west on Clarkston, south on Orion Rd. (unmarked diagonal yellow line), across 4 acre Marshview Connector Park to Paint Creek Trail. A new route under study is from the north end of Marshview Park, go west on Stony Creek to existing safety paths on Orion, south on Orion to existing PCT to Kern Connector (just north of Knights of Columbus), then take this connector south to Paint Creek Trail.



Brewster Rd. Route Being Considered

(North is to the right, West is “up”)

Closing the existing gap between the two yellow pins would complete a loop around this “block” (Dutton, Adams, Silverbell, Brewster) making a complete walking circuit and keeping pedestrians out of Brewster Rd. traffic. This requires property owners along the gap to grant right-of-way for the path.

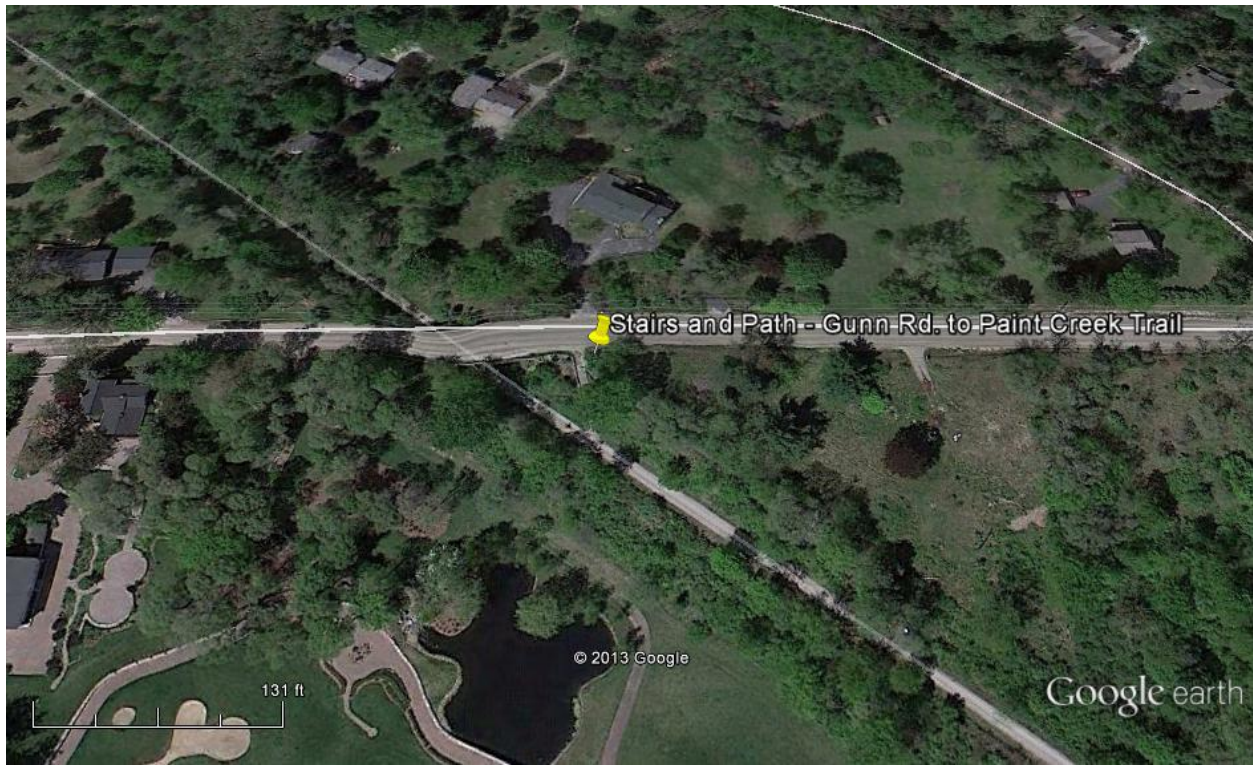


Two Alternatives – Delta Kelly School to Paint Creek Trail

(North is up, East is to the right)

The large number of residents in the southwest part of Oakland Township have no safety path or trail connection to Paint Creek Trail. The \$1,900,000 $\frac{3}{4}$ mile Adams Rd. safety path plan that was abandoned in early 2013 would have made this connection, although its safety was questioned by many (steep slopes). Two safer and potentially less costly options are under consideration.

- 1 - East on Gunn Rd. to stairs / path entrance to Paint Creek Trail, or
- 2 – East on Gunn Rd., north on utility corridor, bridge Paint Creek, to Paint Creek Trail



Stairs and Path from Gunn Rd. to Paint Creek Trail – Closer View

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)

Link to webpage on Township website:

http://www.oaklandtownship.org/boards_and_commissions/zoning_board_of_appeals/index.php

Zoning Board of Appeals meeting originally scheduled for **Feb. 18th, 2014** has been cancelled.

Editorials

Maybe next week.

Letters to the Editors

We welcome these, especially those that add missing facts or correct factual errors, or ask questions of interest to the general community. Facts presented should be verifiable by readers. Please restrict comments to local government affairs.

“Campaign Against the Parks Commission” Described

To: Editor, Oakland Township Sentinel

February 5, 2014

This is in response to your request to describe the “campaign against the Parks Commission” referred to in my citizen comment at the January 27 Board of Trustees (Board) meeting.

Land Preservation Fund Attempted Takeover On April 1, 2013 at the direction of Township Supervisor Gonser, Jim Creech (township manager) issued a memo to the Parks Commission, a separately elected body with its own funding sources. It stated that the Board was taking over administration of the Land Preservation funds, related millages and all related property.

It later became clear at a joint meeting of the Board and the Parks Commission on July 15 that the memo was a unilateral act by Supervisor Gonser of which Board members had no prior knowledge. This attempted power grab then dissipated for all practical purposes.

Parks Rezoning Throughout most of 2013 the Parks Commission sought to have the Board approve the rezoning of seven parcels of land that had been donated or purchased over recent years. The requested zoning was “Recreation-Conservation”, their intended use. Such rezoning has not been an issue in the past. This time it was met with delays and exhaustive requests for more information. Citizen pressure increased, including supportive public comment from citizens whose families had donated land for park use. Finally, at the October 8 Board meeting, after it became clear that there was a majority in favor of passage, six of the seven parcels were approved for rezoning.

Authority of the Parks Commission Throughout 2013 the Township Supervisor claimed increased levels of direct control over Parks employees that would undermine Parks Commission authority. There have been numerous instances and examples. These include: challenges to the Parks Commission's authority to hire parks employees, forced access to the Parks Director's entire email account, and one commissioner, a supporter of the Supervisor, accusing other commissioners of being "unscrupulous," "devious," etc. at the December Parks Commission meeting.

The Parks Director questioned giving up her email password and providing unlimited access to all of her emails and sought guidance from her boss and the Parks attorney. The Township Supervisor then said, in an email, that "she did not "exhibit the degree of professionalism I would expect of a 'Director' level employee" and that he was "nonplussed and questioning your motive." This to a person highly respected in her field. Is it any wonder that we continue to lose capable and valuable township employees?

Attorney Representation Supervisor Gonser has taken a strong position that the Parks Commission should not continue using the attorney they have had for many years, but rather use the new attorney that he and the Board have hired. This persists in spite of the ethics issues that would be caused by one attorney representing two parties that are currently in conflict. The Parks Commission also has other credible reasons for keeping their attorney.

Additional background is available in my comments at the January 27 Board meeting which you have printed in the Sentinel's Weekly News Report for the week of January 31, 2014.

I hope that citizens will continue their support of a Parks Commission that has been such an important part of making Oakland Township the great place that it is. And also, that they will begin to think about the next election.

Reg Brown, OT Resident
