



## Downtown Development Authority

### MINUTES

**Draft**

**THOMAS TOWNSHIP DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
THOMAS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING  
8215 SHIELDS DRIVE, SAGINAW, MICHIGAN  
March 28, 2023**

Members Present:

L. Husen  
R. Weise  
L. McCoy  
S. Goward  
R. Kretz

Others Present:

R. Taylor, Township Manager  
A. Bicigo, Planning/Zoning Asst.  
J. Corriveau, Parks Director  
L. Thayer, Nature Center Coordinator

Absent:

K. Kolbe  
D. Duclos  
F. Gray  
M. Wenglikowski

Weise called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Husen, supported by McCoy to approve the agenda as presented.

**VOTE: YEAS: 5 NAYS: 0 ABSENT: 4 MOTION CARRIED**

Consent Agenda:

Motion by Husen, supported by Goward, to approve the consent agenda of November 22, 2022.

**VOTE: YEAS: 5 NAYS: 0 ABSENT: 4 MOTION CARRIED**

### **Approval of Expenditures:**

Motion by McCoy, supported by Kretz, to approve the expenditures as presented.

**VOTE:      YEAS: 5      NAYS: 0      ABSENT: 4      MOTION CARRIED**

### **New Business:**

#### **A. Parks Director to give an update on the Rebel Magnolia event at Roberts Park**

Thomas Township parks director John Corriveau stated that, originally, the event was held on the soccer fields at Roberts Park. After the first year, it was moved to the softball fields, due to the number of attendees, and the ability of people to sneak into the event. Corriveau explained that the outfield fences of fields 3 and 4 were removed to connect the two fields. This allowed the entire event to be enclosed by the outer fences of the fields. Corriveau stated that the event was not held in the Township after Covid, but is returning this year to Robert's Park on May 13, 2023. Husen stated that around 110 vendors will be attending, including food trucks. Parking will be located in the large grass field in front of the park, with room for roughly 700 cars and handicapped parking closer to the softball fields. Taylor stated there will be a police and fire department presence in case of emergency.

### **Old Business**

#### **A. Discussion, Shields Drive Extension**

Taylor stated that the concept of the proposed extension is to encourage a style of development not common in suburban communities. Shields Drive currently ends behind Meijer, but under the proposed plan would continue through to Kennely Road. Taylor stated that the water line and fire hydrants have already been installed. The proposed plan would allow three-story buildings to be built up against the right-of-way, with businesses on the first floor, and housing above. This would create a downtown-type business district, with a pedestrian focus. Taylor explained that parallel parking would be located on Shields Drive with additional parking behind the buildings. The curve of the proposed extension is intentionally designed to slow traffic coming into the businesses. There are walking paths, ponds, and a faux bridge element as part of the design. Taylor stated that this would be a unique business district to our area, with an eye toward drawing in the younger generation. There is also room to add another road perpendicular to Shields Drive and expand the business district if needed. The challenge being faced is that the current property owner is not a supporter of the proposed extension, with funding being an additional concern.

## **B. Discussion, Water Fountain Update**

Taylor stated that there has been little progress with the project. Otto Brandt, the township attorney, is currently investigating encumbrances on the property related to the MDOT clear sight triangle. There are also several other encumbrances related to utilities on the corner. If any utility work needed to be done, the Township would be responsible for the cost to rebuild the fountain area. Taylor stated that, once Brandt has completed his assessment, the Township will request authorization of funding to have an engineer draw up detailed plans for the project. Weise inquired as to the time frame, to which Taylor stated that construction could begin in September if all goes well.

## **C. Parks Director to give an update on the nature center**

Lynda Thayer stated that she started in 2020 as the Nature Center Coordinator. As of this year, the bathrooms have been completed, the parking lot and driveway were redone, a walkway through the building to allow access to the preserve has been redone, along with adding support posts and repainting the ceiling. Finish work for the floors, drywall, and electrical has been bid out, and will be started soon. Thayer stated there will be historical and science displays, a meeting space, an indoor habitat area, seating with windows overlooking the preserve, and small kitchen. Thayer is working with the Castle Museum to help set up the historical displays and artifacts to be displayed. An observation deck was built in 2022, with plans to complete a 1.3-mile path around the preserve to be completed pending funding. There was also a large number of invasive trees removed from around the building that were in danger of falling on the building. Taylor stated that much of the funding for the project has come from grants and other sources outside of Township funds. Thayer explained that there will be opportunities for educational programs and field trips to the nature center. Taylor also stated that the building can be rented out for events to help fund the continued operation of the nature center. There will be a 10-acre area of sunflowers planted this year, with other areas of native plant and tree species throughout the property. Corriveau stated that, pending the permit, stairs will be installed to access floating docks that were donated to the Township. Thayer stated that they are hoping to have the grand opening in August of 2023.

### **Reports:**

**Chairperson-** None

**Vice Chairperson-** None

**Secretary-**None

**Board Members-** None

**Staff-** None

### **Adjournment:**

Motion by McCoy, supported by Kretz to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

**VOTE:      YEAS: 5      NAYS: 0      ABSENT: 4      MOTION CARRIED**