



Local News

Lincoln Township seeks big grants for park upgrades

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STEVENSVILLE - The Lincoln Township Board at a special meeting on Tuesday approved applying for two sizable grants to do some park improvements in 2012.

The board after public hearings gave its OK to going after a \$300,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Trust Fund for the 80 Acre Park, and a \$75,000 grant from the Michigan Land and Water Conservation Fund for work at North Lake Park.

The township will provide \$100,000 in matching funds for the 80 Acre Park work. Township engineer Dave Austin said the bulk of the \$400,000 project will be construction of a mile-long walking path linking the soccer and baseball-softball sections of the park as well as access to an improved picnic area.

The township will kick in \$75,000 for the North Lake Park grant, though only \$25,000 of that is cash. The rest comes from donations and in-kind services.

Marcy Colclough of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission said the Lakeshore Rotary Club has been working with the township for at least 10 years on North Lake Park improvements. The township's share of the funding includes a \$3,000 Rotary District Grant and \$11,000 in Rotary fundraisers and endowments.

The state trust fund is supported by oil and gas leases on state land. The money doesn't come from the state's strained general fund.

Improvements will include a wetland boardwalk and viewing deck, an improved boat ramp, and a barrier-free fishing area and path.

There were only positive comments during the public hearing on the proposal for the 80 Acre Park, which is at Cleveland and Rockey Weed roads.

Rob Mead, president of Lakeshore Rocket Football, said it's going to be great for parents with kids in multiple sports to be able to go to one location. Rocket football in a separate project is moving from the Township Hall park grounds to the 80 Acre Park this season.

"It will be a great thing for the community," Mead said.

"It's a tremendous asset we have," said Kevin Bushu, a Lakeshore school board trustee and president of the Lakeshore Youth Baseball-Softball Association. "It's going to be a pretty impressive community when it's all done."

There will be a separate \$360,000 paving project at the baseball-softball area of the 80 Acre Park this season.

In response to a question from the audience, Austin said the township is working on making it

possible for people to walk safely to the 80 Acre Park.

Some neighbors of North Lake Park had reservations about the project for that park. One man objected to the presence of the fire pit, saying teens use it past proper hours, and another said "Less is more" and urged that the less done at the park, the better.

However, township Clerk Stacy Loar-Porter said she and her husband use the fire pit to teach Cub Scouts how to safely build and use fires. Trustee Deborah Peterson said it might be more dangerous not to have the pit.

"My feeling is without one controlled site for it, they'll be building them (fires) everywhere," Peterson said.

Colclough said no funding for the fire pit is in the grant application, so it's not a matter to be considered in the application.

The hard-surface walking paths are needed not just for the handicapped, but for senior citizens who have to use canes or walkers, some trustees said.

The township will find out in the fall whether its applications have been approved.

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