

POSITION PAPER

By

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Member Brown Bridge Advisory Committee

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I. OVERVIEW:

The subject of this position paper is the property owned by the city of Traverse City located in East Bay and Paradise Townships, T.26N., R.10W., Grand Traverse County, Michigan. This property is more commonly referred to as "Brown Bridge Quiet Area" (BBQA) in most conversations and is considered a City park. The combined area of this "City park" is 1600 plus acres.

The decommissioned hydro-electric dam that occupied this tract for eight decades was removed during 2012-2013. The dikes forming the dam still exist except for the course of the Boardman River. The Boardman River, which was the water source for the dam, has been returned to its original course, as close as possible. The bottomlands from the backwater pond of the dam are currently open areas.

The BBQA, although considered a park, is not within the Parks and Recreation annual budget. The BBQA is listed as a Special Revenue Fund, Brown Bridge Maintenance Fund listed on page 92 of the City of Traverse Annual Budget, FY 2013/2014. (See page 2 of this document for the detailed account) The \$56,250 of expenditures for the BBQA is balanced by collecting a like amount from cell phone companies for leasing space on the Brown Bridge tower.

The City of Traverse City has a population, by the last census, of 14, 674 residents. I speculate that very few Traverse City residents, probably less than 10%, (1467) use the BBQA for recreational purposes at any time of the year nor would be able to find the area if they attempted to drive to it. It is not enjoyed by a majority of Traverse City residents. Most of the usage, again by my speculation, is from parts of rural Grand Traverse county and surrounding counties. These speculations are just that, as I have found no evidence of a past usage survey.

II. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY:

The Brown Bridge Bottomlands Committee has set goals for 2013 to rejuvenate remaining areas of the bottomlands that were part of the dam removal process. Those plans include, but not limited to, placing vegetative plants and trees that will thrive in the soil types of three spoils areas, strategically placing logs within the Boardman River that will create fish habitat but not interfere with canoe or kayak traffic on the river and improve or create a canoe/kayak launch area at or near the former boat launch site near the southwest corner of the former backwaters (pond) area.

City of Traverse City, Michigan
SPECIAL REVENUE FUND
BROWN BRIDGE MAINTENANCE FUND
For the Budget Year 2013-14

	FY 10/11 Actual	FY 11/12 Actual	FY 12/13 Budget	FY 12/13 Projected	FY 13/14 Approved
REVENUES					
Beach Income	\$ 51,521	\$ 53,186	\$ 50,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 56,250
Reimbursements	1,634	5,093	-	-	-
TOTAL REVENUES	53,155	58,280	50,000	60,000	56,250
EXPENDITURES					
Professional and Contractual	38,261	31,180	32,000	32,000	42,500
Transportation	46	182	-	-	-
Insurance and Bonds	549	422	1,000	500	1,000
Public Utilities	894	742	750	750	750
Repairs and Maintenance	33,021	10,414	12,000	10,000	12,000
Rentals	7,848	7,920	10,500	5,670	-
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	80,619	50,860	56,250	48,920	56,250
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER (UNDER) EXPENDITURES	(27,464)	7,420	(6,250)	11,080	-
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Beginning Fund Balance	30,676	3,221	10,650	10,650	21,730
Ending Fund Balance	\$ 3,221	\$ 10,650	\$ 4,400	\$ 21,730	\$ 21,730

THIS fund is used to account for the repairs and maintenance cost at the Brown Bridge Quiet Area. It is funded by leasing space on the Brown Bridge tower to cell phone companies.

III. VISION:

At this point in time, with the Brown Bridge Dam removed, I truly believe that the BBQA should be sold. Now that statement will create a great deal of controversy, but the explanation to follow may cause some to take pause and think about the proposal.

- A. The sale of the property would only involve the surface rights with Traverse City retaining all mineral rights, thus maintaining the revenue stream from the oil/gas development within the boundaries of the property.
- B. Traverse City would have general oversight of the development plans for the property and maintain 2 – 4 public access sites to the river for fisherman and canoeist/kayakers. These access sites would be of a size to park at least 6 vehicles and have privies at each site.
- C. The development plans could take the form of Crystal Mountain near Thompsonville in Benzie County (crystalmountain.com), The Homestead near Glen Arbor in Leelanau County (thehomesteadresort.com), Kettunen Center east of Tustin in Osceola County (owned by the Michigan 4-H foundation) (kettunencenter.org), Pere Marquette Lodge near Grafton, IL. (pmlodge.net) and Stokely Creek Lodge near Goulais, Ontario, Canada (stokelycreek.com).

All of these developments have a main lodge/conference center for conventions, social events and everyday dining facilities. The surrounding cabins or small homes are for purchase or lease (time share) by the public. No disturbance of the Boardman River waterway would be considered, except for the access sites described above and very limited use by of the development.

- D. Conservatively, if the property has a value of \$5000 per acre, that would bring the sale price to \$8 million. If the \$8 million is put into a trust fund on its own or in conjunction with the current Brown Bridge Trust Fund and at a 5% rate of return on the \$8 million, there would be \$400,000 a year to supplement the City coffers. Of the \$400,000, \$200,000 (50%) would be earmarked for City park land creation, improvement and maintenance and the remaining \$200,000 would go to public safety – the police department to field a traffic officer and the fire department for maintenance and equipment.

The majority of the citizens of Traverse City would derive direct benefit through City park land creation and improvement to and maintenance of existing parks, instead of the very few that currently use the BBQA. In addition, only a small portion of the current \$56,250 would be needed to maintain and insure the public access sites described in paragraph III (B). Of course, the citizens of Traverse City would have to approve this plan through their affirmative vote.

This is a vision that I believe has merit and puts the Brown Bridge property to a use that could create a significant tax base for the two political townships in which the property lies, create many year around jobs, improve the road infrastructure of the area, and create a destination place for the public to enjoy the scenic cross country ski and snowmobile trails of the area and the pristine fishing of the Boardman River. The entire area economy would be boosted.