

BBAC Meeting Minutes – 9/24/15

MINUTES of the **BROWN BRIDGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE** **Thursday, September 24, 2015**

Governmental Center
County Training Room– 2nd Floor
400 Boardman Avenue
Traverse City, MI 49684

Present: Deni Scudato, Chair; Marge Forgione; Larry Gerschbacher; Jim Tuller; Michael Kreft; Paul Maxbauer; Dave Downer; and Marty Colburn, City Manager.

Absent (All Excused): Nelson Asper, Judy Nemitz, Gary Howe, & Ed Flees.

Others Present: GTCD Staff - Steve Largent, and Reb Ratliff;

I Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Scudato at 5:17 pm.

1. **Introductions** – Everyone knew each other so introductions were not necessary.
2. **Approval of Agenda:** A request was made to add an email from Seamus Shinnars to the City Commission reflecting his thoughts on the City's future ownership of Brown Bridge.
Motion by Downer; 2nd by Tuller to approve the Agenda as amended. Approved unanimously.
3. **Approval of 06/18/15 Minutes:**
Motion by Gerschbacher; 2nd by Kreft to approve the minutes as presented.
Approved unanimously.
4. **Approval of 08/27/15 Special Meeting Minutes:**
Motion by Downer; 2nd by Forgione to approve the minutes as presented.
Approved unanimously.

II Review of Open Action Items:

Note: Scudato asked if more background information could be provided for each Action Item.

Action Item 12-2: GTCD staff to install cement ramp to vault toilet building and make sure the building is otherwise accessible by wheelchair for those with disabilities.

Background: In the Fall of 2014, the MDNR & the Traverse Area Paddle Club placed a vault toilet at the lower canoe landing at Brown Bridge at minimal cost to the City. The toilet was used and very much appreciated by paddlers, fisherman, and other visitors.

GTCD staff is planning to pour a cement ramp to make the toilet wheelchair accessible,

Status: Open - Will be done as weather allows.

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Action Item 3-3: Largent to pull together information regarding the history of Park vs Not a Park for Brown Bridge to present at the next meeting.

Background: The Brown Bridge Quiet Area was deemed not to be City parkland by the City Attorney many years ago. Declaring Brown Bridge as “parkland” would require a 3/5 vote of the voters before it could be sold by the City. Many activities, such as oil and gas exploration, timber harvesting, and hunting to name a few would not be allowed if the property were declared “parkland”.

Status: Open – Since the September meeting agenda was full, Largent requested that this item be covered at the December meeting or at a Special Meeting.

Action Item 3-4: Largent to give a presentation at the next meeting regarding GTCD and the Parkland Program.

Background: The Grand Traverse Conservation District created the Cooperative Parkland Program in 1992 through a start-up grant from Rotary. The City and Grand Traverse County both own land along the Boardman River that require management by natural resource professionals. The Parkland Program has grown ever since.

Status: Open - Since the September meeting agenda was full, Largent requested that this item be covered at the December meeting or at a Special Meeting.

Action Item 6-1: Largent will follow-up with Dituri to determine if settlement funds set aside for helping the breach impacted section of the River could be used above the former impoundment.

Background: As part of the settlement of lawsuits against the contractor & engineering firms after the October 2012 breach of the dewatering structure at Brown Bridge, \$180,000 was placed in a fund to be used for restoring the river. Rotary of Traverse City are holding the funds. A portion of the funds were used to pay Wil Harmen of Stream Mechanics to determine what should be done. Dave Downer suggested that a portion of this money be used to stabilize the banks above the former impoundment. Harmen agrees but isn't sure if the money can be used in this area.

Status: Open - Still waiting for a response from the attorneys involved in the case.

Action Item 6-3: Largent to distribute a copy of Will Harmen's report to the BBAC.

Background: See above.

Status: Open - A request was made to the attorneys asking if the report can be made available to the public.

Action Item 6-4: GTCD staff to review the information sent by the MDEQ and report back to the BBAC at the September meeting.

Background: At the direction of the BBAC Chairman, a request was made to the MDEQ's Office of Oil, Gas, and Minerals regarding records showing what, if any, wells at Brown Bridge have been “fracked”. GTCD staff received a response that included a link to a large spreadsheet showing all the wells in the area.

Status: Open – Since the September meeting agenda was full, Largent requested that this item be covered at the December meeting or at a Special Meeting.

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III Park Improvement Fund

At their September 8th Regular City Commission meeting the City Commission approved a request from the BBAC for a \$300,000 allocation from the Brown Bridge Trust Parks Improvement Fund. The original idea for a Park Improvement Fund came from this Committee. The discussion then turned to the process on how to request funding once a 50% match is secured. It was stated that the process needs to be flexible and uniform. Discussion Ensued. **Action Item 9-1:** GTCD staff to meet with the City Manager regarding the “request process”.

IV Project Updates (GTCD Staff)

1. **East End Bridge** – Largent reported that the engineering firm, Gourdie Fraser & Associates have finished the drawings and are preparing the permit application. The Conservation District is working with a government relations consultant to make arrangements with the National Guard to place the bridge using a helicopter.
2. **West End Bridge** – Largent reported the Rotary’s Gourmet Game Dinner Committee is having a fundraiser later this month with the proceeds being dedicated to the proposed west end bridge. This bridge is in the location of the historic Brown’s Bridge that was constructed in 1869 and eventually became the site of the area’s first state road. The intention is for the City to make an application to Rotary Charities to help with fund the bridge. This is one of the projects on the list for the Park Improvement Fund.
3. **MDNR Habitat Improvement Grant & EQIP**
 - a. **Aspen Cut** – Ratliff reported that he’s planning to meet with AJD Forest Products timber buyer regarding the 11-acre wildlife habitat improvement cut as proposed. This cut is located near the intersection of East Arbutus Lake Road and Hobbs Highway. Approximately 200 trees will be left standing for use as instream habitat wood (see #4 below).
 - b. **Tree & Shrub Work Bees**- Ratliff invited the BBAC to help plant native trees and shrubs in the bottomlands during a public work bee scheduled for October 24th.
4. **Habitat Wood** – Largent showed slides showing the 100% draft plans for the addition of habitat wood in the new section of river at Brown Bridge. He reported that the joint project between the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Adams Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Natural Resources Conservation Service and others is nearly ready for permits. He showed slides of the proposed access areas and stated that there will be impact but it should only be a one-time impact to the bottomlands. Permits are expected to be applied for soon with hope to have construction underway yet this winter. Downer stated his opposition since he feels the erosion areas upstream of the former impoundment should be fixed first. Largent stated that the habitat wood comes from a different “pot” of money. Discussion ensued.

- V **Dave Downer Presentation** – Pictures were projected that Downer took earlier this year showing severe streambank erosion upstream of the former impoundment. He stated that

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he would like to see the Boardman River Dams Implementation Team (IT) finish Brown Bridge dam removal by repairing this erosion. Largent stated that the eroding banks were expected due to over 90 years of sediment accumulation on the floodplain but agreed that they need to be stabilized now that the banks have receded back to a more stable slope. Discussion ensued.

Action Item 9-2: GTCDD staff to work with the City Manager to inform the IT that priority should be given to stream bank erosion & habitat improvement in the section of river upstream of the former impoundment.

Action Item 9-3: GTCDD staff to work with the IT and other project partners including the Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay and the GT Band to seek funding to repair the banks.

Action Item 9-4: Send Boardman River Dams Project Management Team meeting minutes to the BBAC.

- VI Seamus Shinnors Correspondence** – A copy of an email sent to the City Commission from Mr. Shinner's stating his opinion that since, in his estimation, less than 10% of City residents use or even have ever visited the Brown Bridge Quiet Area, and the area is no longer anything special since the dam & pond are gone, that the City should consider selling the BBAC to fund other City projects such as Hickory Hills, Boardman Lake Trail, or swap with the County for the Civic Center. Discussion ensued. No action was taken since the email was addressed to the City Commission.

Public Comment – None.

- VII Adjourn: Motion by Maxbauer, 2nd by Tuller; Passed Unanimously. 7:20 pm**

Next Meeting: December 10, 2015 - 5:15 pm, Governmental Center

Minutes respectfully prepared and submitted by S. Largent.