



Recreational Authority 2020 Millage Request FAQ

Updated 9/16/2020

What is the Recreational Authority?

The Recreational Authority was formed in 2003 under Michigan’s Recreational Authorities Act (PA 321 of 2000) as a partnership between the citizens of Traverse City and Garfield Township “for the purpose of the acquisition, construction, operation, maintenance or improvement of public recreation centers, public parks, and public conference centers as may be acquired by the Authority or as may be transferred to it by a participating municipality.” (Articles of Incorporation, adopted June 30, 2003.) A seven-member volunteer board of directors oversees the Authority, with three seats appointed by the Traverse City City Commission, three seats appointed by the Garfield Township Board of Trustees, and one seat appointed by the board of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy.

What does the Recreational Authority do?

In 2004, voters in both Traverse City and Garfield Township approved ballot measures for the Recreational Authority to purchase and manage three properties as public parks, known today as Historic Barns Park, Hickory Meadows, and part of the Open Space on West Grand Traverse Bay. [Download the Recreational Authority brochure.](#)

How is the Recreational Authority funded?

Voters in 2004 passed a bond measure to purchase the three properties, and also passed a 20-year operating millage of up to 0.1 mill. The bonds will be paid off in 2024 and both the operating and debt millages will expire at that time. The operating millage does not cover all of the expenses associated with the parks, so the Authority also relies on partnerships, grants, rental revenues and donations to help it take care of the parks.

What is the 2020 millage proposal request?

On November 3, 2020, Traverse City and Garfield Township residents will vote on a ballot proposal to levy up to 0.3 mill to provide for Recreational Authority operations for 20 more years (into 2040) and to leverage the purchase of the former Kroupa property next to Hickory Hills for preservation as parkland. [Read the full ballot resolution.](#)

What will be the annual cost to the homeowner?

Voters will be asked to approve an operating levy of up to 0.3 mill, which would cost people who own a \$200,000 home (\$100,000 taxable value) about \$30 per year (\$2.50 per month). However, the Authority Board of Directors is committed by resolution to only levying up to 0.15 mill for the first four years (2020-2023). A 0.15 levy will cost



people who own a \$200,000 home (\$100,000 taxable value) about \$5 more annually than people currently pay, for a total of \$15 per year (\$1.25 per month).

Is the millage rate request a renewal or an increase?

This is an increase from the Recreational Authority's current operating millage rate of 0.0968 (reduced from the voter-approved 0.1 mill by Michigan's Headlee Amendment). The Recreational Authority hasn't requested a millage increase in 16 years.

What happens to the old millage rate if the new millage rate is passed by voters?

The Recreational Authority Board is committed by resolution to set aside the old operating millage and not levy it again. The old operating millage will officially expire in 2024, the same year that the bonds for the original three properties are paid off.

Why are you asking for a new millage rate now instead of waiting until 2024, when the 2004 millage is officially expired?

The main reason is the opportunity to acquire the former Kroupa property, which can't wait for four more years. Also, the Recreational Authority relies heavily on grants, fundraising and long-term planning to take care of the parks it manages. Sources of that funding have told the Recreational Authority that they are less likely to make awards to the Authority as its known operating window continues to shrink. Asking voters to consider this in 2020 will allow the Authority to pursue preservation and management of the former Kroupa property in a timely manner and help the Authority attract outside sources of funding.

What will happen if the millage request fails?

If the millage isn't approved the Recreational Authority will not be able to preserve the former Kroupa property and will not be able to demonstrate operational stability to continue to attract outside sources of funding.

What does the Recreational Authority hope to provide if the millage is approved?

The goal of the millage is to allow the Recreational Authority to sustain parkland operations over the long term and preserve additional parkland for the community to enjoy.

How much will the millage raise in the first year?

If levied in full, a 0.30 levy in the City and Township would raise an estimated \$644,000 in its first year, and by law this will be the language that voters will see on the ballot. However, the Authority Board of Directors is committed by resolution to only



levying up to 0.15 mill for the first four years (2020-2023). A 0.15 levy in the City and Township would raise an estimated \$322,000 in its first year.

Will property tax capturing entities such as DDAs and Brownfield Authorities receive a portion of the Recreational Authority's millage?

Yes, by law a small portion of the Recreational Authority's millage funds will be distributed to other government entities that capture property taxes.

Why can't the Recreational Authority do more with the funds it currently receives?

The Recreational Authority is operating at its maximum capacity with the three properties it already manages and can't preserve an additional property without an increase in operational funding. Activities and public use at all the properties have dramatically increased since 2004, which also increases the operating costs of the Authority.

How many people work at the Recreational Authority?

The Recreational Authority doesn't have any direct employees. It contracts with a part-time executive director to handle general operations, an event venue manager to oversee rental operations that preserve the Cathedral Barn at Historic Barns Park, and a few other local vendors that provide services such as trail maintenance and snowplowing. Recreational Authority Board members are all volunteers, as are hundreds of interested citizens that participate in work bees and other activities at the parks.

Who pays for the organizations and activities at Historic Barns Park?

The Recreational Authority owns Historic Barns Park. Through a management agreement, it currently partners with three different community nonprofit organizations at the park, including The Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park, SEEDS, and TC Community Garden. These partners provide experiences and activities the public desired to have at the park. The Recreational Authority provides space in the park for these partners to conduct their activities for the community's benefit, but does not pay the partners. The partners are responsible for their own fundraising and for taking care of the areas of the park in which they operate.