

Berlin Township Parks and Trails Committee

of Delaware County, OH 43015

Regular Meeting

Thursday, April 14, 2022: 6:30 p.m.

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CALL TO ORDER

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The meeting was held at Berlin Township Hall, 3271 Cheshire Rd, and was called to order by

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President Zach Brown at 6:30 p.m.

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Committee members present: President Zach Brown, Vice President Joanne Workman,

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Secretary Christina Littleton, Mark Rawdon, Hillary Cerny, Summer Marshall

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Also present: Trustee Raehll

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Not present: Coli Lucas

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AGENDA ITEM: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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Mr. Brown made a motion to approve the minutes from the 3/10/2022 Parks and Trails

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meeting, as presented. Ms. Workman seconded the motion.

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Vote: Brown, yes; Workman, yes; Rawdon, yes; Cerny, yes; Marshall, yes; Littleton, yes

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Motion carried; the minutes were approved.

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AGENDA ITEM: BETH HUGH, CIVIL SPECIALIST KORDA ENGINEERING

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Beth Hugh introduced herself and explained her background. She was the Orange Township

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Parks and Maintenance director from 2009-2018 and worked for Berkshire Township for one

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year while they were trying to pass their levy. She now does consulting work for Korda

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Engineering. She has a background in landscape architecture and consulting for developers and

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the government. She said Korda would be interested in working with Berlin Township.

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Ms. Hugh said she has worked on a couple master plans. She said public involvement is very

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important for a number of reasons, including transparency and grant approval. Mr. Rawdon

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asked about starting a nonprofit support group and whether it had to be established for a

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minimum length of time before it could be effective in securing funding. He asked if townships

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had a way around that. Ms. Hugh said she was not aware of that requirement and that it may

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be new. When she was with Orange and Berkshire, they had a budget of \$100,000 for trails and

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park connections. She thinks they are two separate programs. Mr. Rawdon confirmed they are

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two separate programs.

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Trustee Raehll getting everything in alignment in a master plan can be difficult because you are

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planning toward an unknown future. But without it and feedback from residents we will not be

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as competitive when applying for grants if at all eligible. Ms. Hugh said the township would

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30 typically be eligible, but it is the competitiveness that is important. Grant funders want to see
31 that the section of trail they are funding is not the only trail that is going to be built. They want
32 know what it is connecting and how it may impact economic development.

33 Trustee Raehll asked about a Friends of the Park or nonprofit association that had been
34 suggested by Mr. Rawdon. Ms. Hugh said she is unfamiliar with the political conflict. Typically, a
35 PAC would be created. She did not participate in the Orange Township PAC because she wasn't
36 a resident and as an employee of the township it was a conflict. The PAC work is key for
37 anything that goes on the ballot and getting communications out. It allows more people to be
38 involved without being a committee member. The PAC can raise funds and advocate for a levy,
39 where the committee cannot. The committee can only educate.

40 Mr. Rawdon said that the PAC could be helpful in doing work outside of public meetings.
41 Trustee Raehll agreed and explained that the committee cannot hold quorum outside of a
42 public meeting and that it includes discussion through emails. We need to assure accessibility
43 and transparency in all government functions.

44 Trustee Raehll said the Board of Trustees isn't sure of the appetite for parks and trails across
45 the township. A question persists that everyone wants parks, but do they want to pay for
46 them? We need clarity with valid and reliable data before we put something on the levy. She
47 asked Ms. Hugh about the survey that Berkshire Township sent out and why she thinks it
48 failed.

49 Ms. Hugh doesn't think it was the questions on the survey that were the issue, but that there
50 was misinformation that was distributed before the vote. The township could not advocate for
51 or against the levy to make corrections. It is difficult to get the correct information out unless a
52 resident finds it on the website or goes to public meetings. Berkshire was fairly aggressive in
53 their levy because the master plan focused on buying property adjacent to the township hall. It
54 included a park, playground, and trails all at once. She said education is key in fighting
55 misinformation and that includes public involvement.

56 Ms. Cerny asked what the motivation was against the levy and who was responsible. Ms. Hugh
57 said it was just a group against new taxes and growth. It was not a PAC and there was no PAC
58 for the levy. She said the Trustees did not speak out in support of the parks or share how they
59 could improve the community and that may have created hesitation among voters.

60 Mr. Brown asked if the committee could just form a PAC to counteract misinformation. Ms.
61 Workman asked if the committee could be a part of the PAC. Trustee Raehll said committee

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62 members could be part of the PAC but the PAC could not be part of the committee. Ms. Hugh
63 said business operations have to be separate. Mr. Brown asked if there are rules on where the
64 PAC can meet. Ms. Hugh said yes, there are rules and would involve Sunshine Laws. Trustee
65 Raehll said there cannot be a majority of the committee members involved in the PAC. She
66 further explained Sunshine Laws. She described a scenario of how a PAC may form and
67 function. Ms. Marshall mentioned informing neighbors and letting them know how they can get
68 involved. Trustee Raehll confirmed that the committee can inform neighbors.

69 Ms. Hugh said there is a difference between a PAC and a 501-3-C. The 501-3-C is what Mr.
70 Rawdon was talking about and is what is eligible for the County Commissioner funding. Mr.
71 Rawdon asked if they could take political action too. Trustee Raehll said a 501-3-C is a nonprofit
72 and there are rules and regulations about what money can be spent by a nonprofit and one
73 involves political campaigns. PACs are formed to support issues or people. Ms. Hugh explained
74 that a PAC is a Political Action Committee. Trustee Raehll explained that individuals of a
75 nonprofit can form a PAC. Only three people are needed to form a PAC which can then run as
76 its own separate entity. Ms. Marshall asked if the PAC can accept donations. Ms. Hugh said the
77 PAC money would go toward a levy and the 501-3-C money would go to playgrounds, trails, or
78 donated to the township as match money.

79 Trustee Raehll asked if while working for Orange Township if connections with Berlin were ever
80 considered. Ms. Hugh said she met with Berlin Trustees at the time and they were not
81 interested in trail connections. She continued that it takes time for the old and the new
82 communities and ideas to merge. In Orange Township all of the park land was donated by
83 developers. Ms. Marshall said she had been wondering about the possibility of developers and
84 neighborhoods donating land or perhaps sharing the cost of trails. Ms. Hugh said there are pros
85 and cons. Orange settled on donations of 5 acres or more in order to be an asset to the
86 community. The township can no longer collect taxes on any land that is donated. Playgrounds
87 on government property do not require liability insurance as long as they are maintained.
88 Orange accepted the trail on the north side of North Road once it was built to township
89 specifications.

90 Mr. Brown asked if Ms. Hugh had been involved in any trail construction on state land. She said
91 she yes, that she worked to get the bridge built over the spillway, the Bale Kenyon trail. She
92 said Alum Creek was great to work with and that federal land was also involved.

93 Ms. Cerny asked at what point in the process of development would the committee need to
94 discuss land donation with a developer. In Orange Township, with the parks and trails master

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95 plan in place, development plans were reviewed by the parks director to make sure the
96 requirements were met. Trustee Raehll said as discussed last meeting it is good to be proactive
97 rather than reactive. As developers have come in in the past, they tell us what they want, which
98 has resulted in mismatched trails. Having a master plan in place would provide clarity for all and
99 make it easier for the developers to plan for the township's expectations. Ms. Hugh agreed that
100 it is much easier for the developers to plan trails in the initial stages than after the fact. She
101 suggested rather than dictating the exact location of a trail, indicating the connecting points
102 instead. Orange's master plan was also important in the planning process to widen Powell
103 Road. The county obtained enough right of way to make room for the planned trail.

104 Ms. Cerny asked if the bridge over Route 23 was part of the master plan and how they
105 navigated that project. Ms. Hugh said it was 3 years with ODOT. It was purposely designed so it
106 did not need to be in ODOT right of way. They took an aerial easement over ODOT and many
107 requirements had to be met. It was a \$1.4 million grant called the Transportation Enhancement
108 Grant, but it has changed names. It was precisely engineered to meet the needs of all involved
109 parties. Ms. Littleton said she would love to see a bridge over Route 36/37, which is likely
110 longer than the 180' maximum span of the Orange Township bridge and would require some
111 kind of easement for supports. Mr. Brown asked if going under 36/37 is possible. Ms. Littleton
112 said there is currently a huge culvert that passes under that is part of the equestrian trail, but it
113 is muddy.

114 Ms. Cerny asked if groups can collaborate, like those that create wildlife bridges. Trustee Raehll
115 said that is a possibility as long as it's done in a public forum. Ms. Hugh added that the
116 committee could also partner with other townships, the county, or the city of Delaware and
117 that that it can be a benefit when applying for grants. Mr. Brown asked about partnering with
118 Orange Parks or Alum Creek. Ms. Hugh said most grants have a match to them and some allow
119 you to do in kind work. For the trail along Owenfield to Highbanks, Orange partnered with
120 Highbanks and Metroparks. Part of the match was that Highbanks built the base for that trail.
121 Mr. Brown said that there are several opportunities for Berlin to connect to Orange so it seems
122 beneficial to collaborate with them. Ms. Hugh agreed and said Orange thought Berlin would
123 eventually be interested in connecting. Ms. Littleton said that's the attitude Berlin Township
124 should have about Brown Township as we build our master plan. Connecting with Brown is
125 another good reason to have a bridge over 36/37.

126 Trustee Raehll shared two concerns of the Board of Trustees. One is the cost of the ongoing
127 maintenance of trails. The other is whether residents are willing to pay for parks and trails. Ms.

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128 Hugh said while she was at Orange, they always had a parks levy and grant match funding to
129 take care of operations and maintenance. Funding was much simpler than having to use the
130 general fund. Trustee Raehll mentioned Genoa used the general fund for their parks. Ms. Hugh
131 agreed and added that Genoa had a roads levy. Orange was the opposite using the general fund
132 for roads, but had a park levy. Trustee Raehll said Berlin does not have a roads levy, but it has
133 been discussed along with a parks levy. She added that Berlin has some of the lowest taxes and
134 that the possibility of raising taxes can be a daunting prospect. The standard things that people
135 say are that the return on investment, increased valuation of properties, and the fact that it's
136 no more than a couple cups of Starbucks a month may result in a successful levy. Berkshire may
137 have failed because they asked for too much at once.

138 Ms. Hugh explained some reasons why Berkshire asked for so much. A master plan can help
139 communicate what levy funds will be used for. She advised that the committee clearly says
140 what they are going to and then follow through.

141 Ms. Cerny verified the Orange Park was donated and asked how the pool was funded. Ms. Hugh
142 said it was funded by a bond and that it was the first levy. Ms. Cerny asked if there were any
143 campaigns against the levy. Ms. Hugh did not see any.

144 Mr. Brown asked Ms. Hugh where she would make connections to Orange Township if she were
145 Berlin Township. She recommended talking with Tony Eyeran of Evans Farm and let him know
146 Berlin is now looking at trails to see if they can help. She reminded the committee that it never
147 hurts to ask. Berlin could also look at modifications to zoning to encourage trails and
148 connectivity. It is important to connect commercial areas, neighborhoods, parks, township hall,
149 and schools.

150 Mr. Brown asked how much the township should try to work with Alum Creek. Ms. Hugh said to
151 absolutely connect with Alum Creek. Mr. Brown asked about the feasibility of getting a path all
152 around the lake. Ms. Hugh said that would be fantastic. Ms. Littleton asked how the committee
153 envisions the trail loop around the lake, if it would be near the roads or deeper in the park. She
154 said many bridges would probably be necessary over the fingers that come off the lake. Mr.
155 Brown said he has thought about that. Right now, the mountain bike trail created an extended
156 berm. He suggested that might be a possibility with a retaining wall. Ms. Hugh said that's when
157 you communicate with the county, when they widen Africa Road, that you want a trail that
158 goes across the bridge. Sometimes the trail is attached to the bridge or the road and sometimes
159 it will go into Alum Creek. Getting the master plan to MORPC, regional planning, and the county
160 engineer's office. If they get federal funding, they have to build complete streets which include

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161 a sidewalk. If the master plan shows a trail there, you can push for a 10 ft wide trail. Hugh
162 mentioned 10 ft wide trails are typically required for grants.

163 Ms. Cerny suggested aligning township trails with existing trailheads at Alum Creek. Trustee
164 Raehll suggested inviting someone from ODNR to a parks meeting, like Jeff Large. Mr. Rawdon
165 said he is one of his contacts and was extended an invitation.

166 Trustee Raehll asked about the Ohio to Erie Trail, noting it goes across Route 36/37 and
167 Cheshire Road, which could be 2 main arteries connecting Sunbury, Berkshire, Berlin, and
168 Delaware city. Berlin could become a connector through the Berlin Business Park which
169 contains a trail requirement. The master plan could help guide where those trails go for a
170 cohesive plan.

171 Trustee Raehll spoke with the Board of Trustees about a survey. It was determined valid and
172 reliable data is needed, not just a small sample of the population that is pro-trails. They
173 discussed using ARPA funds to fund surveying and consultation. She said the township would be
174 interested in receiving a proposal particularly for the survey aspect. Ms. Hugh said a full-blown
175 master plan like Berkshire's would include looking at parks and concepts, trail master plan,
176 recommendations for funding, estimates of everything in the master plan, and a statistically
177 significant survey that includes all demographics. This kind of master plan would cost \$90,000-
178 \$120,000.

179 Mr. Brown asked if the township has grant money to spend on that. Trustee Raehll said it is not
180 grant money and there is not that much money. ARPA allows money to be spent on parks and it
181 could be used for surveying. The results of the survey may inform what this committee does.

182 Trustee Raehll said a challenge is that the township does not have anyone willing to donate
183 land now and space is running out. Acquiring land and a master plan are necessary for us to ask
184 for a levy. Ms. Hugh said the Berkshire master plan and levy included acquiring land. She added
185 there are some challenges with government buying property. That type of master plan would
186 include property suggestions and estimates.

187 Trustee Raehll asked if Korda does the survey portion. Ms. Hugh said no, that Korda has
188 partnered with the Edge Group and Pros Consulting, which was used in several communities in
189 the area. She offered providing a proposal within Berlin's threshold. Trustee Raehll said that
190 would be great. The township should be ready when opportunities emerge.

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191 Mr. Rawdon asked Ms. Hugh to comment on working with the federal government. Ms. Hugh
192 said it's been wonderful. Sylvia Chelf supports all trails and parks and provides support. Alum
193 Creek has a master plan with trails would partner to construct those. They can't apply for
194 grants, but may be able to use budget money to help match. Mr. Brown asked if Sylvia is who to
195 talk to about the Alum Creek master plan. Mr. Rawdon said Sylvia was going to come to the
196 meeting, but was likely busy. She would be very helpful as would Kara Bloomberg, the lead
197 ranger. Ms. Hugh said the Alum Creek master plan is available on their website.

198 **AGENDA ITEM: UPDATES FROM ORANGE TOWNSHIP FOLLOW UP**

199 Mr. Brown spoke with a man named Syllas Bowers, the head of the parks department at Orange
200 Township. They discussed the process of creating a trails master plan at a high level. Mr.
201 Bowers said to start with the map and figure out what you want to connect. He provided some
202 websites to reference, including Orange Township's site. He said to start small and make
203 connections bit by bit. The Delaware County Engineer's office can help come up with a plan,
204 especially with smaller projects. For larger plans, the County Prosecutor's office may need to be
205 involved. Another resource is an engineering consultant. A man named Chris Betz from the
206 Prosecutor's office assisted Orange Township. Once you have the cost, the RQ, it's all about the
207 getting the funding. Mr. Bowers added the best thing to do is work with the developers to
208 include the master plan in their development plan.

209 Mr. Brown said more information from their conversation can be found on the shared Google
210 drive. Trustee Raehll verified that the committee members were able to access the drive. She
211 said any documents that go into the drive are subject to public records. The information should
212 be considered carefully before adding to the drive. The committee members will be editors on
213 the drive, and anyone else will be able to view only. There was discussion about previous
214 documents that should be added as well as what new information will be added.

215

216 Mr. Brown said Orange has a \$1 million parks levy and a roads levy that contribute their regular
217 funding. Ms. Workman asked how to propose issues on a levy. Trustee Raehll compared
218 possibilities to the way school levies are presented and explained some of the levies in other
219 townships and their relationship to trails. She shared some ways in which townships have done
220 fundraisers and gotten donations, such as mulch.

221 **AGENDA ITEM: UPDATES FROM CITY OF POWELL AND GENOA**

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222 Trustee Raehll said this will be discussed at the next meeting.

223 Ms. Workman said she could share her information from speaking with Delaware. She left a
224 message for Ted Miller, the director of parks and natural resources for Delaware. His secretary
225 sent some information on how their committee was formed. They have representatives,
226 residents from different wards, the superintendent, and a student. The committee discussed
227 including these representatives in Berlin Township Parks and Trails meetings.

228 Trustee Raehll shared information about the school's plan to include trails and crosswalks near
229 Berlin High School. The committee discussed the importance of trails for safely walking to the
230 schools.

231 Trustee Raehll explained some of the development coming to the area near the high school and
232 where trails have been proposed. She expanded and explained plans for other areas of the
233 township, pointing out a potential location for a township park just north of Lackey Old State
234 Road. Another potential location is at the intersection of Piatt Road and Cheshire Road. Ms.
235 Littleton said Scott Sanders asked the zoning commission if they wanted to keep that area
236 planned for a park. Ms. Brown of the zoning commission had said that it would be a good idea
237 to keep that as a park since Cheshire Road is planned to be a main artery for trails through the
238 township. Trustee Raehll said completing the trail on Cheshire will be challenging because of
239 the existing homes that are opposed to a trail through their yards. The committee also
240 discussed the county owned parcel on Big Run Road.

241 Trustee Raehll led a discussion about annexation and ways it can be discouraged. She also
242 spoke about the plan for the Berlin Business Park.

243 Ms. Marshall asked what would happen if one of the parcels was donated to the township.
244 Trustee Raehll said that once it becomes Berlin, it stays Berlin. The surrounding land could still
245 be annexed.

246 **AGENDA ITEM: PARKS AND TRAILS POTENTIAL SURVEY**

247 Trustee Raehll said the committee still needs to come up with survey questions and suggested
248 members email them to Mr. Brown. Ms. Cerny asked if there was a certain question format to
249 be used. Trustee Raehll said she likes to use a 4-point scale to avoid the middle choice. A ranked
250 question format is also a possibility.

251 **AGENDA ITEM: LATE ITEMS**

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252 Trustee Raehll said her 2 late items, Google drive and consulting, had already been discussed.

253 Ms. Littleton shared that another resident told her the Olentangy Little League organization is
254 desperate for ball fields. They have lots of funding available to build and maintain the fields if
255 the land could be provided. There may be an opportunity for a partnership there. Ms. Cerny
256 supported this information. Trustee Raehll said township land could be used for a ball field.
257 Churches may be another opportunity to have space for a ball field.

258 Mr. Brown made a motion to adjourn without objection. Ms. Cerny seconded the motion.
259 Meeting was adjourned.

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Zach Brown, President

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Joanne Workman, Vice President

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Christina Littleton, Secretary

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Colynda Lucas

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Mark Rawdon

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Hillary Cerny

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Summer Marshall