

ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023

Place: Third Christian Reformed Church, 2400 Winchell Ave, Kalamazoo, MI

Board Members:

Present: Chris Shook, President; Diana Morton-Thompson, Vice-President; Christopher Bovid, Secretary; Peter Kushner, Past President; Barb Miller; Christine Chadderdon; Stephanie Watkins, Paul Scott, Eric Boersma

Excused: Rachel Bennett, Treasurer

In Attendance: Approximately 35 people (includes Board members)



- I. Meeting called to order by Chris Shook, President; 7:02 PM
 - A. Announcements:
 - i. City of Kalamazoo Dept. of Parks & Rec is working on its next 10-year plan and seeking community input; reach out to kzooparks.org
 - ii. Announcement by attendee regarding 10 garden clubs in Kalamazoo; they get together after Thanksgiving each year, hosting an event open to the public
- II. MINUTES – October 18, 2023 (Chris Bovid, Secretary)
 - A. Minutes from the 10/18/2023 ODWNA meeting are posted on the ODWNA website.
 - B. Minutes adopted without objection.
- III. TREASURER’S REPORT - (Chris Shook for Rachel Bennett, Treasurer)
 - A. ODWNA Checking Account Balance as of 10/31/2023 was \$8,001.52
- IV. BUSINESS ITEMS
 - A. Complete Streets – Traffic Pattern Changes at Oakland and Parkview update. (Eric Boersma, Liaison from ODWNA to City of Kalamazoo)
 - I. Two contacts at the City if people have questions/concerns: George Waring (City of Kalamazoo Chief Civil Engineer / Public Services) and Dennis Randolph (City Traffic Engineer, implements changes)
 - II. Oakland/Parkview/Whites road construction scheduled to be done late 2024 or early 2025. The intersection is just one part of it. After that they will start the eastbound portion of it.
 - III. The reworking of the intersection:
 - i. Oakland (Northbound traffic: 3 lanes, left turn, straight through, and right turn only)
 - ii. Oakland (Southbound traffic: all eastbound traffic for Whites Road to turn left at the Oakland/Parkview traffic light) City is intentionally slowing traffic down right now
 - iii. East-West traffic on Whites: through lane on each direction and turn lane on each direction
 - iv. Bike lanes have already been drawn in on the East side of Whites Road with a narrowing down
 - IV. Be careful. Be patient. Be aware that people in the right lane might try to speed ahead and cut in when traffic backs up.
 - V. There will be no overhead signage per the drawings. There will be street signage and lane markings.
 - VI. If anyone has recommendations please send them to Eric Boersma ericmboersma@gmail.com or odwnanews@winchellneighborhood.org and the Board will pass them along to George Waring.
 - VII. The curb cuts / bump outs were added to shorten the distance for students crossing the street to get to Woods Lake School.
 - B. Constitution Review Committee Update (Barb Miller)
 - I. The committee has met three times now. The next meeting is in December. They will hopefully finalize recommendations in December and get them to the board.
 - II. An attendee asked whether there will be opportunity for members to see changes to the Constitution. Chris Shook indicated yes as changes to the Constitution would need to be voted on by membership.
 - C. Neighborhood Quick Win Projects Update (Stephanie Watkins)
 - I. Pollinator seeds are still available to anyone interested and are sourced from a Kalamazoo company with native plants. Anyone interested may contact Stephanie Watkins if interested in receiving some seeds.
 - II. Benches: two of the new benches will be at bus stops on Oakland Drive with cement pads to make them ADA accessible. The other three new benches will be placed throughout the neighborhood where approved by City staff.
 - III. If anyone has ideas for future Quick Win Projects (must align with specific goals and actions of the ODWN Neighborhood Plan; total annual funds for the projects have historically been \$7,500) please email them to the Board of Directors as we are always looking for projects when Quick Win funding becomes available.
 - D. Asylum Lake Policy Management Council (Paul Scott)
 - I. The ALPMC recently met.
 - II. The ALPMC’s project to remove road salt from the storm water runoff from Drake Road is under way and is experimental.
 - III. DNS Stadium Drive LLC still wants to build a car wash on the SE corner of Stadium and Drake and had a rezoning application filed with the City. The Planning Commission meeting regarding the application

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was going to be scheduled for December 7 but the applicant's attorneys have notified the City that they are now postponing until a March 2024 Planning Commission meeting.



- E. Woods Lake Association (Chris Bovid)
 - I. The Woods Lake Association had its annual meeting in October and there has been some changes in the Board of Directors / Officers (new Treasurer).
 - II. The Michigan Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes, & Energy (EGLE)'s chloride study of Woods Lake continues (note the red ball in the middle of the lake with monitors attached to its cable underneath). The Kalamazoo Dept. of Parks & Recreation's water quality study of Woods Lake also continues. Any questions may be directed to Chris Bovid at cbovid@gmail.com as president of the Woods Lake Association.

- V. FEATURED SPEAKER – ODWNA SPEAKER SERIES
- VI. Heather Ratliff, Friends of Kleinstuck, Secretary/Treasurer
- VII. *How They Saved 12 Acres of Woodland*
 - A. *The Kleinstuck Preserve is 48 acres*
 - i. *The Stewards of Kleinstuck was established in 2007*
 - ii. *Its purpose was to manage invasive species and restore habitat*
 - 1. There is a pocket of wetland in the middle of the preserve that is a kettle lake
 - 2. The Preserve is full of native flora and fauna
 - B. In Fall 2019 roughly 12 acres were listed for sale adjacent to the Kleinstuck Preserve at a price of \$699,000
 - C. The Stewards of Kleinstuck had reached out to the owner multiple times in the months before the listing about negotiating an acquisition.
 - D. October 30, 2019 the Stewards of Kleinstuck held a community meeting in the gym of the Kazoo School to assess community interest in protecting that land. Turn out was very good.
 - E. The next night the Stewards of Kleinstuck received a matching pledge grant of \$250,000, which made the purchase start to feel possible.
 - F. 2019 Status:
 - i. Dollars in the bank ~\$4,000
 - ii. Number of fundraising campaigns previously conducted: 0
 - iii. Number of acres previously saved: 0
 - G. Stewards of Kleinstuck Board of Directors (2019-2021):
 - i. Erin Fuller – President
 - ii. Kate Kirk Greenberg – Vice President
 - iii. Heather Ratliff – Treasurer/Secretary
 - iv. Jacquelyn Mcshulskis
 - v. Paul MacNellis
 - vi. Steve Wester
 - vii. Dave DeBack
 - viii. Jacob Akert
 - ix. Rina Tabla – Kalamazoo College
 - x. Fiona Summers – Kalamazoo College
 - H. Many more meetings with community organizations ensued
 - I. Turning Point: Seeking legal counsel
 - i. Pro bono professional legal services were provided
 - ii. Attorneys Steve Glista and Leo Goddeyne recommended:
 - 1. Convert to a director led model
 - 2. Right to Solicit with MI
 - 3. Insure the Board of Directors
 - 4. Separate Bank Account
 - 5. Signing authority
 - 6. Get a realtor involved
 - J. Commercial Real Estate:
 - i. Andrew Gykos
 - K. November 12, 2019 (property on the market ~1 month)
 - i. First Offer: \$450,000 (ask seller to finance via land contract)
 - ii. Seller response: More money needed
 - L. November 27, 2019 (property on the market ~ 6 weeks)
 - i. Second offer: \$550,000; Seller financing
 - ii. Seller response: Seller would finance at 7%
 - M. Cyclical questions that kept arising:
 - i. How to raise money for something you don't own:
 - ii. How to own something you don't have the money for
 - N. Fundraising Groundwork

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- i. Guidestar
 - ii. PayPal – Banking App
 - iii. Give Lively – Donation Software
 - iv. Little Green Light – Donor Database
 - v. Door to door campaign
- O. Turning Point: Graphic Design Marketing
 - i. “Keep Kalamazoo Wild”
 - ii. Slogan eventually placed on the oak leaf to complete the logo
- P. Increase in Legitimacy
 - i. Key to success was having two foundations with early support:
 - 1. Irving S. Gilmore Foundation for capacity building
 - 2. Jim Gilmore Foundation – initial pledge of \$10,000
- Q. 2020 Valuation of the property became very important so it was time for a property appraisal.
 - i. Conservation value (\$650,000) vs Economic value (\$450,000)
- R. February 17, 2020 – Property had been on the market for four months
 - i. Stewards of Kleinstuck were seeking a private mortgage lender
 - ii. They had received \$65,000 in pledges, plus matching pledge
 - iii. “This is an uncomfortable process but it would be more uncomfortable if we weren’t doing the work to protect this land.”
- S. March 15, 2020
 - i. COVID-19 shutdowns began
 - ii. COVID benefit? “A 20% increase in outdoor recreation” was recommended.
 - iii. Question about whether it was an insensitive time to fundraise.
- T. “Social trails are developing across the preserve with the increase in traffic...”
- U. Pandemic Work
 - i. All Zoom all the time
 - ii. Conflict of Interest Clause in Bylaws
 - iii. Non-Discrimination Policy
 - iv. Stryker-Johnson Request
 - v. Trademarking of “Keep Kalamazoo Wild”
- V. Turning Point
 - i. Notified by an ally that a non-local entity was making inquiries about the land for retirement community
- W. June 2020 Property had been on the Market 7-8 months
- X. June 27, 2020 –Third Offer of \$550,000 cash with remainder financed
 - i. Seller accepted
 - ii. 4 days later a full price offer from development company was received by the seller but seller was already under binding contract with Stewards of Kleinstuck.
- VIII. Stewards of Kleinstuck had to obtain a Survey as part of the purchase
- IX. Stewards of Kleinstuck also had to obtain a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (from Envirologic) as part of the purchase
- X. Next steps were More Fundraising - needed to collect \$110,000 before the closing date
 - A. Call in the pledges
 - B. Social Media
 - C. “Keep Kalamazoo Wild” Merchandise
 - D. Signs on the parcel
 - E. Brokerage Account opened to receive stock from donor
- XI. September 30, 2020 – Close on purchase of the property
- XII. Following the closing, the Stewards of Kleinstuck had their first in-person meeting in 7 months
 - A. Stewards of Kleinstuck was now the owners of 12 additional acres adjacent to the Kleinstuck Preserve
- XIII. MATH:
 - A. \$550,000 - \$250,000 - \$110,000 = \$190,000 to raise.
 - B. 5 year mortgage with annual payments.
 - C. First payment due 1 year later.
- XIV. COVID Continued
- XV. More Fundraising: Direct Mail Campaign (2556 homes around Kleinstuck Preserve)
- XVI. Many donations and many positive letters received
- XVII. Some negative responses as well
- XVIII. Many grant applications submitted
- XIX. January 2021 First payment made on the mortgage (9 months early)
- XX. Deep gratitude to the many foundations that supported the price.
- XXI. June 2021 – Property owned free and clear.
- XXII. Thank You to our Community!
- XXIII. Stewards of Kleinstuck updated its logo
- XXIV. Assessment done for the property
- XXV. Land Management Plan created for the property
- XXVI. Two ongoing threats facing the property:

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- A. Deer – have decimated and continue to decimate all of the saplings; no new / young trees in the Kleinstuck Preserve.
 - i. Third Christian Reformed Church's grant funding for some new saplings and some fencing to protect them
 - B. Long term ownership concerns:
 - i. Some legal language concerning the property currently protects it but other organizations do not have interest in long term ownership
 - ii. In the meantime the Stewards of Kleinstuck holds title to the property
- XXVII. Q&A with attendees:
- A. While WMU does own the Kleinstuck Preserve, WMU has plainly expressed that it is not interested in also owning the property (n/k/a the "Little Sister Preserve")
 - B. Concerning the property adjacent to the Asylum Lake Preserve, what parallels or advice would Heather have?
 - i. After the first rezoning attempt and the second rezoning attempt (City-initiated) did not happen, Heather thought it would be nice if someone in the community knew about how to protect natural areas in and around the City. Heather Ratliff reached out to Josh Kieser and they have been working since June to see if there is any way something similar could be done. Their first attempt has been to try to get all the player organizations in town on board and asking if there is anyone who is willing to own that property in perpetuity. It is difficult to conduct a fundraising campaign for property that is not owned. Hopefully there will be some conversation with the seller in the coming weeks about his interest in the property. It is developable right now zoned as a residential property (subject to the Natural Features Protection Zoning Overlay and site plan review and approval).
 - ii. Cost Guesses: Property Cost + Operating + Endowment
 1. Purchased for \$2,500,000 in 2017
 2. Best case scenario would be if it could be purchased now for \$2,250,000 - \$3,000,000
 3. Operating Costs (legal, accounting, marketing, survey, appraisal, etc)
 4. Length of campaign - 1 year? 7 years?
 5. Endowment Cost
 - a. Assumptions: 4% capitation Rate
 - b. No Stewardship
 - c. \$325,000
 6. Grand Total: \$3,000,000 (perhaps wildly low)
 7. Fundraising comparison compared to Stewards of Kleinstuck
 8. Heather believes the chance of the project happening without major donors is very small.
 9. Roughly 14,000 donations of \$225 could potentially make the funding happen if the price were near \$3,000,000.
 10. Many people have spent hundreds of hours on this project already.
 - iii. Working with ALPA and the ODWNA will be helpful going forward.
 - C. Question whether there has been any thought put into whether there would be any way to get the property to generate income? Heather says yes: educational landscape; indigenous peoples history, etc.
 - D. Social media posts by people enraged about developing the Preserve indicates that people really don't understand that demanding that the property not be changed is not effective whatsoever.
 - E. How can we help? Send your name and email address to Heather Ratliff at: StadiumDrake@gmail.com
 - F. Discussion ensued regarding how/whether the Natural Features Protection Zoning Overlay affects development of green space.

XXVIII. Chris Shook, President, thanked Heather for her presentation and all those who attended and adjourned the meeting at 8:27 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Christopher Bovid, ODWNA Secretary