

 Charter Township of Garfield Planning Department Report No. 2022-46			
Prepared:	May 31, 2022	Pages:	2
Meeting:	June 6, 2022 – Parks and Rec Commission	Attachments:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Subject:	Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area Update – June 2022		

BACKGROUND AND UPDATE:

This report provides an update on the planning process for the Grand Traverse Commons Natural Area.

First Public Engagement Event – Open House at Cathedral Barn

On Wednesday May 11, the Township and Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc. (ECT) hosted an open house at the Cathedral Barn seeking public feedback on the future design for the Commons Natural Area. There were around 75 people from the community in attendance throughout the 3-hour open house. Attendees use the Commons Natural Area for a variety of activities and there was a mix of people who use the park primarily for cycling, hiking, or other activities. Materials displayed at the open house included an overview of existing conditions and two conceptual designs: one showing primarily separated trails and another showing mainly shared-use trails. People were encouraged to leave comments on these conceptual designs; some of the common themes expressed are listed on the following page:



Open House at Cathedral Barn

- Regarding the concept designs presented, most people wanted to see trails separated by use type, primarily to keep bikes away from other users
- Highlight some of the natural features such as natural springs with design and interpretive signage
- Highlight historical elements of the site with design and interpretive signage
- Incorporate areas for outdoor education
- Incorporate wellness walk
- Move the North Long Lake Road trailhead (unsafe)
- Improve wayfinding
- Add areas to enjoy the view

Survey

An online survey was also made available, which allowed participation especially for those unable to attend the open house. About 79 people took the online survey; full responses are attached to this report. Much of the input mirrored that provided at the open house, with some common themes including the following:

- Include water fill stations
- Include restrooms
- Incorporate comfortable, accessible benches
- Increase bird habitat
- Include a natural playground for children
- Highlight the history
- Dogs off-leash need to be addressed
- Address the spread of graffiti
- Improve wayfinding
- Improve boardwalks

Stakeholder Interviews

Staff and ECT have interviewed several different stakeholders and group representatives to gain a sense of how different organizations view the Commons Natural Area and any input they have on this process. The stakeholder groups have included Grand Traverse Conservation District, Joint Recreation Authority, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, the Minervini Group, Grand Traverse Audubon Club, Cherry Capital Cycling Club, TART, Northern Strategies 360, the Botanic Gardens, Norte, and Copper Ridge. Engaging stakeholders has brought to light several different perspectives and potential issues. It is important to keep stakeholders engaged in the process to ensure that any issues requiring collaboration have mutual support, such as trailheads located on neighboring properties including Copper Ridge, Historic Barns Park, and Minervini Group property.

NEXT STEPS:

The next step in this process is to create different design scenarios. These will be in greater detail than the concepts from the first open house and include design options for specific site elements. Staff anticipates conducting a second public engagement event in mid-to-late July, where the public can provide feedback on specific design scenarios.

ACTION REQUESTED:

This report is for information and discussion only. No action is requested at this time.

Attachments:

1. Commons Natural Area Questionnaire – Survey Results